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PUT TO A TEST; OR, A FORTUNE HUNTER'S FATE.

BY GEORGINA DICKENS,

AUTHOR OF "A SCATHING ORDEAL," "LORD ROTH'S SIN," ETC.



"THIS IS A PORTRAIT OF LATER DATE—MY GRANDFATHER'S GRANDMOTHER."

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OR,

A Fortune Hunter's Fate.

BY GEORGIANA DICKENS,

AUTHOR OF "THE COST OF A FOLLY," "LORD ROTH'S SIN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A PASSING STRANGER.

"DREADFULLY crowded—and what a medley!" cried Mrs. Olivia Sutherland, putting up her gold-rimmed eye-glasses as she threw herself back on a seat in the great dining-hall of a certain large New York hotel. "I can't think how Captain Kingsborough could have allowed us to come here! Did you ever see such people as we find ourselves in the midst of, Celia?"

Mrs. Sutherland looked appealingly into the face of a tall, dark-eyed and very beautiful girl standing beside her.

"Do you think they are different to the usual run of people we have met at all the various hotels we have stayed at abroad?" she replied, with a puzzled air. "There is a mixture certainly; but it seems to me that at Vienna and—"

"Ah, but that was abroad; so it didn't matter. You don't understand these things yet," returned her companion, rather impatiently. "Captain Kingsborough does, and ought to, and I shall just tell him what I think when he comes down. How late it is—eleven o'clock! Ah, here he is at last!"

Olivia Sutherland, a small, fragile, *passee* little woman, verging on forty, but still retaining the traces of former beauty, held out a tiny ring-bedecked hand to Captain Kingsborough, who slowly crossed the room to where she sat, and having duly taken and bowed over the extended hand with rather exaggerated gallantry, seated himself beside her, bestowing a smile and bow on the young lady, who was still standing silently on the other side as he did so.

She turned away angrily, yet blushing as if half pleased, and then Mrs. Sutherland broke forth:

"What in Heaven's name induced you to bring us here, Captain Kingsborough? We had much better have gone to—"

The captain, a tall, faultlessly-dressed, middle-aged man, with handsome features, and yet—to most people—scarcely a pleasant face, raised his eyebrows in affected surprise.

"My dear Mrs. Sutherland, excuse me, but really it was you who brought me here."

"I? What an accusation!" cried the other, turning a large pair of gray eyes on him indignantly.

"Yes. Don't you remember at Vienna—or Rome, was it?—your dear friend, Janet Harewood, telling you to try this hotel? She vowed it was the most convenient, most comfortable in New York," he answered. "I never heard of it before; but—"

"Janet must be mad! She always was queer," replied Olivia. "I'll never take advice from her again!"

"No, don't," he replied. "But have you been uncomfortable? Has Miss Saville been annoyed?"

"No. Why should she? But look round the room, Captain Kingsborough!"

The captain slowly cast his eyes round the hall.

"A fine room enough. What's the matter with it?" he replied, with a cunning twinkle in his eye.

"Pshaw! you know what I mean. Look at the people!" she replied, in a disdainful tone, which she did not even try to lower in consideration of her neighbors' feelings.

"Nobodies, certainly; but there is no one in town. You forget it's only just the end of April. These are a lot of foreigners, of course, and—"

"Jews and foreigners," she retorted. "I never saw such a set!" And she threw herself back with a look of disgust.

As she pronounced the words in a shrill, fretful tone, a young man, who till then had been steadily perusing a newspaper, lifted his eyes, full of a half-amused, half-scornful humor, and glanced at Olivia and her companion, then at Celia Saville.

Their eyes met, and hers fell, while a deep blush dyed her cheeks. He was a foreigner, certainly, though of what nationality she could not quite make out; and he must have heard Mrs. Sutherland's ill-bred remark.

"Foreigners, and Jews and American nobodies, I dare say," replied the captain, with a yawn; "but they won't hurt you, Mrs. Sutherland, and we leave this afternoon. Come; we will adjourn to a private room. They have a good *chef* here, at any rate. Miss Celia, allow me; and he offered an arm to each of the ladies.

As she passed out of the room, Celia could not help casting a quick glance at the stranger whose eyes had met hers a few minutes before. He was talking fluently in Italian to a gentleman beside him; yet Celia felt certain he was no Italian—his complexion was too fair, albeit his eyes were dark, almost as dark as her own, and the form of his features was more that of an Englishman or an American.

"Who can he be?" she thought, as she left the room, without observing that his eyes followed her retreating form curiously.

All the morning she was silent and preoccupied, notwithstanding that Captain Kingsborough did all in his power to enliven her, causing Mrs. Sutherland to make one or two bitter little speeches, intended to show the captain that she considered him her special property, and that she resented his paying attention to any one but herself.

"It's just as well," she thought, an hour or two later, "that we are at home again, and Celia is going back to her grandfather's. Lord! how dull she will find that little village after the life we have been leading! It's well, perhaps, that he didn't know that Celia was her grandfather's heiress. I took care to tell no one, and I doubt if the poor simple child knows it herself. At any rate, she has never hinted it to me. George can't marry without money."

So saying, she gave the finishing touches to her traveling costume, the last directions to her maid, and descended to the reception rooms, where she found George Kingsborough waiting, and the carriage ready to take them to the station.

He looked a little amazed as she entered.

"Where is Miss Saville?" he inquired.

"Late, as usual," she replied dryly. "She will try her husband's temper in that respect—that is to say, if she ever marries; but she's no money, you know, and unless—"

"No money at all? That's a pity!" replied the captain.

"Why a pity?" said Mrs. Sutherland, sharply.

"Oh, for the girl herself. With all her beauty—she is really lovely, you know—she may be left in single blessedness. A fellow can't marry without money nowadays. Ah, here she is!" he replied, quietly.

Mrs. Sutherland's face had clouded during the first part of this speech, and even the second part failed to restore her to perfect equanimity.

"How late you are, Celia!" she said crossly. "Where is Leontine?"

"Let me take your traveling-bag and shawl. I really am so sorry!" began Celia.

"No! no!"—giving them to her, nevertheless.

"Now, Captain Kingsborough, we are ready."

And taking the captain's arm, she left the room, Celia following.

On the doorstep stood the stranger. He was just about to get into a hack on which were already placed two worn-looking portmantaus.

"What a handsome young fellow!" said Mrs. Sutherland, with an expression of interest on her face intended to inflict a wound on the captain.

"Quite so," he replied. "A common Italian, I believe, and one of the people you were running down just now. He heard you, too, or I am much mistaken."

And the captain laughed maliciously as he noticed the way in which her face fell.

Olivia Sutherland, he knew, loved admiration, albeit her morning of life was passed, and would not willingly have offended the pride of any man whose attention or homage it might have been possible for her to win.

"Well, we shall never come across him again, so it doesn't matter," she replied, in a comfortable voice. "What time does the train start? I hope we arn't late."

"Your friend will be before us," he replied, as the hack containing the stranger passed them.

"We shall not be early, but we shall have time enough. Here we are. I'll see to the tickets. Where do you go, Miss Saville?"

"To Alderton; don't forget," she answered, eagerly.

"All right," he returned.

And in another moment he was with the ladies again, and putting them onto the train.

"Just in time," he said, as he jumped in after them.

Olivia touched his arm as he seated himself beside her.

"See!" she said, archly.

"Oh, he is here, is he? So you were wrong in what you said just now," he answered, in a low voice. "Miss Celia, here's your ticket. You leave us, then, at the Oldford Junction?"

The stranger slightly raised his head as the words fell on his ear.

"Yes," replied Celia, "and I have a full hour's traveling before I get to Alderton."

"I'm so sorry! Wish I could go with you; but you arn't afraid—" began the captain.

"What? and leave me to go on all the way to Ingelwood alone—I who dread traveling by myself—who never set foot in a train alone? How cruel of you to think of it, Captain Kingsborough!" cried Olivia, looking really vexed and hurt this time. "My poor husband would never hear of my making the smallest journey alone; and Ingelwood—"

"But Captain Kingsborough is not thinking of going to Alderton with me, Mrs. Sutherland," interrupted Celia.

"Oh, no, no; don't be frightened. I'll see you safe to your own doors. Miss Saville, you see, is not afraid, and"—in a low voice—"doesn't care for my society much, I fear, if the truth were known."

"Now, you are unkind!" smiled Olivia, while Celia threw a half-reproachful, half-petulant glance at the captain. "You'll be sorry to say good-by to me, and Captain Kingsborough too, won't you, Celia?"

"Certainly; you have been very kind to me, Mrs. Sutherland, and I have enjoyed myself so much. I shall miss you so dreadfully!"

And the tears filled her eyes.

"There, there, my dear child, don't make a scene! I shall miss you, too; but we shall meet again, and then—"

Celia shook her head.

"Grandpapa will never spare me again, I fear; he is growing so old and so very blind. Unless you come to Alderton, my chance of seeing you will be small."

"But you will let us come, won't you?" said the captain, quite earnestly this time.

"Grandfather will be delighted to see you, I am sure," she replied, demurely.

"And you?" he said, spite of Olivia's darkening brow.

She did not reply; but her smile was enough. The captain was content, and little more was said till they reached Oldford Junction.

Olivia embraced her friend with effusion, while the stranger quietly quitted the car.

"Your baggage will have to be rechecked, Miss Celia," said the captain. "I'll get out and look to it for you."

"No, no, George—Captain Kingsborough!" cried Mrs. Sutherland, clasping her hands theatrically. "I can't let you leave me. If you get out the train may go on, and you will be left behind. Call a baggageman for Celia, can't you? There! I told you so—there is the whistle! We are off! Good-by, my dear! Write to me to-morrow! A pleasant journey to you!"

And the train moved quickly out of the station, leaving Celia standing amid the crowd, feeling very forlorn, and wondering where her baggage might be.

"Can I be of any assistance to you?" said a voice close to her.

And looking up, she saw the stranger beside her.

She blushed in spite of herself, and was about to answer in the negative; but he continued:

"We have just two minutes."

"And my baggage—" cried Celia.

"Is all here—I will see to rechecking it. Let me take you across to the train. We have no time to lose. They don't wait for any one when once ready."

"A common Italian." The captain's words came back to Celia as she hurried after him to the other platform. Yet, though there was something foreign in his accent, there was nothing of it either in his manner or appearance.

"Here we are! Let me put your basket in the rack," he said, as he seated Celia in the car and wrapped her shawl round her. "It gets chilly of an evening here, it seems to me," he added, as he did so.

"Thank you. Yes, the spring has been a cold one," she replied; "at least, so I am told; but I have been six months absent from home."

"And I but six days in America," he replied, with a smile that lighted up his face charmingly, as Celia thought.

She rather longed to ask him from what country he came; but he soon gave her the desired information without her being obliged to

put the question, and learned that he had landed from Italy but six days before.

They talked together at intervals till the train stopped at Ryfield, the station before reaching Alderton.

"I must say good-by to you here," he said. "I am sorry not to be able to see you to your journey's end."

"Ah! I have five miles to drive after reaching Alderton. Cedar Grove is six miles from Ryfield," she replied.

"Cedar Grove?" he said, wonderingly.

"Yes; my grandfather's place. Good-by!" she said.

"By the powers!" he said, in a low voice, as he stood on the platform, looking after the receding train.

"By your leave, sir!" shouted a porter, wheeling a huge truck of baggage by him.

"With my leave or without," he muttered, bursting into a curious laugh. "But who is she, I wonder?"

CHAPTER II.

AN UNTOLD SECRET.

UTTERLY unconscious of the peculiar effect her words had produced on the stranger, Celia Saville settled herself comfortably in her seat, and began to think, the image of her former companion quickly passing out of her mind, and other thoughts and remembrances taking possession of it.

She felt sad and dull at leaving Mrs. Sutherland, albeit, during the six months she had spent in her company, she had often declared to herself that her friend was the most selfish and aggravating person she had ever had to deal with; and she sighed quite sadly when she thought of Captain Kingsborough, and wondered when she would ever see him again, or if ever.

"He would have seen me into the train if there had been time, and Mrs. Sutherland would have let him," she thought; "and perhaps he might have said something. I know he was sorry to say good-by. She would hardly let him shake hands with me. She's been kind to me in many ways, though not as far as Captain Kingsborough is concerned. I really believe she imagines he is in love with her; yet he has said in my hearing more than once that he would never marry a widow, however rich she might be. I wonder if—"

She laid back her head in the cushion with a soft light in her eyes and a flush on her cheek, and hardly moved again until the train stopped at Alderton, and she saw one of her grandfather's servants standing on the platform waiting for her.

"How is your master, James?" she asked, as soon as she alighted and had seen her trunk safely deposited beside her.

"Well, miss," replied the man, "but very blind—worse and worse he do grow in that way, miss; and he's irritable and uneasy like. We be all glad you are back, miss. Master's not able to get out alone."

Celia's face fell.

"Poor grandfather!" she murmured, as she took her seat in the brougham, then she added, almost petulantly: "What a time I shall have of it with him!"

The five miles' drive seemed as if it would never end. The roads were ankle-deep with mud, and Celia thought that never did any pair of horses go so slowly as the pair of fat old bays in the carriage.

The carriage turned in at an open gate, and passing along an avenue of fine old trees, drew up at last at the door of her home.

It was a strange old place, with its diamond-paned windows and curious architecture—an imposing and curious building, built in the time of the Revolution. The interior was brilliantly lighted up, and as Miss Saville entered the hall, the servants were there assembled to welcome her home.

"My grandfather—your master—where is he?" she asked, looking round.

"In the study, miss," replied the butler. "He's very bad to-day."

In a moment Celia crossed the hall, and entered the room at the opposite side.

"Grandfather!" she said, softly—"dear grandfather, I have come home!"—sinking on her knees beside the old white-haired man sitting in the arm-chair before the fire.

He did not lift his head, or remove the handkerchief he held over his eyes.

"Grandfather!" she repeated, in an almost frightened tone. "Speak! I am here!"

"Here, are you?" he replied, still without moving. "I hear a voice. It is like my grandchild's; but I shall never see her again!—never

look on her pretty face more! I am blind, child—quite blind!"

"Blind!" she cried, in a voice of horror.

"Yes, blind! I may—I shall never see again!" he answered.

Celia burst into tears, and took one of the old man's hands in hers.

"Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you write and I would have come back long ago?" she faltered.

"Ay," he replied, his face growing dark and sinister, "you'd have come back and worried me to death with lamenting over the pleasures you had lost! No, no, girl; I know better than insist on unwilling service."

"My services to you have never been unwillingly rendered, sir, believe me," said Celia, warily.

"Hem! I'm bound to believe you, I suppose. But go now; you must be tired. Go and get your dinner, child; I'll talk to you afterward—at least, if you're not too fatigued to listen to a blind old man's babblings."

"I will be with you in half an hour, sir," she replied, with a touch of sadness in her voice, as she left the room, two tears standing in her eyes.

"Why was I never told this, Mrs. Giles?" she asked almost sternly of the housekeeper.

"The master would not hear of it, miss. 'Why spoil her pleasure?' he said. But don't be downhearted, miss; the great doctor who came from New York to see the master did not bid us give up all hope. The blindness may be cured; but the master's old, and there must be an operation. It's cataract, I take it, miss."

"Well, I wish I had been sent for," said Celia.

"But of course, if the master forbade it, you were powerless. Poor grandfather! what does he do with himself all day? Before, he used to be hard enough to amuse, but now—"

"He just paces up and down the room like a caged lion, miss, talking to himself; but as you are come, miss—"

"As I am come! What can I do, Giles? You know how often I used to anger and offend him, and—and—it will be worse now! Oh, what shall I do?"

That night Celia's pillow was bedewed with bitter tears.

Blindness! What an ending to a life such as his had been! Active, vigorous, and masterful, quick to anger, vindictive and jealous in his temperament, he had known little of rest or inactivity during the seventy years he had passed in the world. Hence the change to him was worse than death itself. Sometimes he wished for death, and even in his more desponding moments thought of seeking it, instead of waiting—waiting through years of darkness, till he should hear its call.

But there was a dark corner—a secret in Gerard Grandford's life which made him shrink from self-destruction. What that secret was no one knew, or ever had known; not even the brother from whom, thirty years before, he had inherited Cedar Grove; not even his wife, whom he had loved with a strong, selfish love the two short years she was spared to him; nay, not even the daughter who had married twenty years before the husband of his choosing, and died abroad of a broken heart, leaving her baby-daughter to his care—his grandchild—oh, so like the child he had idolized!—and yet with a look in her dark eyes, at times, that reminded him of her father—the man he had hated so bitterly, and had seen sink into a drunkard's grave, ruined and abandoned, without putting out a finger to help him; nor when Celia grew up did he ever dream of confiding it to her. Yet, all that night, till early dawn, it was before his mind, and he could not banish it, do what he might.

"What makes me go back to past years so, I wonder?" thought he, as he tossed and turned on his sleepless pillow. "Old age and infirmity are making a child of me, I suppose. But my secret is my own. No one—not a soul—knows it, or can guess at it; and, mayhap, I have no cause to regret, to repent! Pshaw! I am a fool, indeed!"—bursting into a harsh laugh, which roused the watchful servant, who now always slept in his master's dressing-room.

"Did you call, sir?" he asked.

"Call?—no. What hour is it?"

"Past nine, sir," was the reply.

"Is Miss Saville down?" he asked.

"I will inquire, sir," was the response.

"Yes, do so. But no; I will sleep again. At eleven you may call me."

And the heavy domestic thankfully returned to his bed, glad of the chance of an extra hour's repose.

Celia was up and out in the garden before her grandfather was stirring.

The old man was peevish and irritable, and expected her to attend to his slightest wishes and commands. First she read the morning's news to him, listening to his remarks on the events of the day, and a long dissertation on politics, which neither interested nor amused her. Next she had to take her grandfather for his daily walk. That done, she sat quiet as a mouse in the study, while he snoozed in his arm-chair. Then dinner came, and a little music (old-fashioned airs and ditties, in which the old man delighted), and toward midnight Celia was dismissed, with the sour remark, "that for one who had been traveling for six months, she had precious little to tell or to say for herself."

So day after day passed. Very few visitors came to Cedar Grove, and those who did remarked that Miss Saville looked ill and worn, not any the better for her trip abroad.

The weather, which had been cold and rainy all April, took a sudden turn in May, and the sun shone bright and warm, bringing out the leaves on the trees and the flowers in the woods and hedges in thousands, gladdening the hearts of many, and even raising the drooping spirits of Celia Saville a little.

She had been very depressed of late. Her grandfather had been in one of those moods which often tempted her to believe that he hated her.

No one had been near the house and she had only received one short, cold letter from Olivia Sutherland since her return. She felt, in the old place, as if she were hidden away in a forgotten corner from the rest of the world, where no one would ever find her.

One bright, warm morning, however, as she was pacing up and down with her grandfather beneath the trees of Cedar Grove, she saw a tall figure walking quickly toward her, and, with a start, recognized the stranger whom she had met in the train.

He advanced toward them with a quiet, self-possessed air, as if any idea of being an intruder had never entered his head; indeed, as if he were certain of meeting with a welcome.

He raised his hat as he came up with them.

"Good-morning, Miss Saville," he said, quietly. "Possibly you may have forgotten me. This is Mr. Grandford, I presume?"

"I am Mr. Grandford, sir," replied the old man. "One of my granddaughter's foreign acquaintances, I suppose?"

"No, grandfather," interrupted Celia, an angry feeling filling her breast; "I have scarcely the pleasure of this gentleman's acquaintance, although I have not forgotten (as he seems to think I may have) his services to me at the Junction as I was returning home."

"This gentleman was of service to you. Then let me at least thank him," said the old man, in a tone intended to humiliate Celia, for his temper was anything but good that morning. "I am obliged to you, sir, for whatever services you rendered Miss Saville. You are not American, I judge, from your accent! I am a poor, blind, useless man, you see, and it is only by my hearing I can judge and—"

"I am a foreigner," he answered; "and you are right, sir."

Celia felt her grandfather's arm tremble slightly.

"From what country, sir, may I ask?" he said, shortly.

"From Italy," he replied.

"Ah! do you know our country well?" asked Mr. Grandford.

"I have spent a very short time in it, sir; but I hope to see more of it before I leave again. I heard Cedar Grove was a place of considerable antiquity, and presumed so far as to—"

"Come in and see it by all means. My grandchild will be proud to do the honors, and if you will take lunch with us, and smoke a pipe afterward with me, I shall be glad. Italy is a country I've always taken an interest in; but you have been in all the other countries of Europe too, of course?"

"Yes, I've traveled through them," he replied.

"And as you know my name, and my granddaughter's," went on Mr. Grandford, "perhaps you will tell us yours?"

There was a very slight pause before the answer came.

"My name is Geoffry Dumont!" he replied.

"Then let us return to the house now, Mr. Dumont. I will make you over to Celia—Miss Saville—and she will show you all that our place contains worth seeing," said the other; and taking Celia's arm again, they walked slowly back beneath the branching oaks and elms to the house.

CHAPTER III.

A STORY OF THE PAST.

Geoffrey Dumont proved himself a pleasant guest, and it was easy to see Mr. Grandford was delighted with his new acquaintance. After lunch he sat talking to him in the drawing-room, instead of retiring at once to the study to take his afternoon nap, and it was nearly four o'clock when he remembered that his guest had seen none of the sights of Cedar Grove.

"Dear me, how time flies!" he said, as he heard the clock strike. "Miss Saville must show you what she can before it gets dark; but you must favor us with another visit, or you will not be able to inspect all of our curiosities. You are not leaving the neighborhood now?"

"No; I am staying at Ryfield, not more than five miles off," replied Geoffrey. "It is a lovely spot, and I enjoyed my walk from it to this, this morning. I am expecting my horse and dog-cart from New York every day, and propose to remain here till I have seen all there is to be seen in the vicinity.

"Then I shall hope often to have a chat with you, sir. Now my granddaughter is ready to show you the house," replied Mr. Grandford.

Celia rose slowly from her chair—almost unwillingly, as it were. "Shall we go through the picture-gallery first?" she said, in a constrained tone.

"If agreeable to you," replied Geoffrey, with a bow.

Geoffrey Dumont followed Celia into the picture-gallery in silence. It was a long, oaken room, carpeted down the center with thick Turkey carpet, the boards on either side being of highly-polished wood. It contained portraits of the Grandfords from the time of the pilgrim fathers to the present day.

Mechanically Celia began her task of show-woman.

"This," she said, "is the earliest ancestor, William de Grandfort, we possess; and this is his son, or grandson—there is some doubt which. This," she went on, "is Phillipa de Grandfort, who married one of the first Dukes of Albemont; and this— But really, Mr. Dumont, I do not think you are listening to me, or looking at the pictures."

"Pardon me, I am not so remiss as you imagine," he replied, hastily; but, in truth, he had been watching Celia, and thinking what a beautiful face and form she possessed, and wondering how she could endure existence with no other companion than the morose old man they had just quitted, and that it was little wonder her face was thinner and her eyes less bright than when he had seen her six weeks before in the city.

"This," said Celia, going quickly on to another group of pictures, "is a portrait of later date, my grandfather's grandmother, an English beauty of the time of the Georges; and—"

"How marvelously like you! Excuse my making the remark," cried the young man.

"Yes; so they say," replied Celia, quietly ignoring the compliment. "All these pictures are of later date again. I ought to have begun at the other side of the gallery; but I am not such a good show-woman as my grandfather imagines. Still, as we have got so near the present day, we may as well take a look at his portrait, and at my great uncle's, from whom he inherited Cedar Grove. Are they not fine?"

"Very good—excellent! But—but whose is this small portrait?" pointing to a small oil-painting of a young man, that hung close by the larger one of the former owner. He was a step behind Celia, or she would have seen a peculiar look in his eyes, and noted a quivering of the lips as he spoke.

"That?" she replied. "Ah, there is a sad story connected with that picture; it is of the only son of my great uncle, who ought, at this moment, to be the owner of this property; but he had some disagreement with his father—I hardly know what about—and left home, went abroad, and for some years was not heard of. News came afterward of his death. My great uncle, they say, was never the same after it, and soon died, leaving the estate to my grandfather providing nothing was ever heard more definitely of his son. That was long before I was born, you see; but I believe it is the correct account of what happened."

"Did he die unmarried?" asked Geoffrey.

"As far as we know. Every inquiry was made, and nothing of the existence of a wife was discovered," she answered.

"No wife—no child?" continued the stranger, thoughtfully.

"No," said Celia, with a sigh; "or grandfather would not be the owner of Cedar Grove, nor I his heiress."

"Oh, you are to be the owner of all these lands, then?" said Geoffrey Dumont, looking at her curiously.

"Yes," she replied, with a short, hard laugh; "unless I should do anything to displease grandfather, and cause him to disinherit me, which well may be."

Her tone was very sad and bitter, and Geoffrey pitied her from the bottom of his heart.

"And if he did, what would you do?" he asked.

It was a strange question; but Celia was in a strange mood, and did not resent it.

"I have no other friends or relations in the world besides him," she answered. "I have acquaintances, of course. Well, I suppose I could work—be a governess, or companion, or—One can always die."

"Do not speak so! Do not talk so lightly of death!" returned Dumont, so severely that Celia raised her eyes in surprise. "Forgive my warmth," he said, gently; "but your tone frightened me. You have a long life of happiness before you, I make no doubt."

Celia was offended, and turned haughtily away.

"I am very foolish, as you remark, Mr. Dumont. Let us finish the gallery before dark. Grandfather is sure to ask me to-night what you thought of his pictures. He positively adores them, and if the place were ever to take fire, they are the first things he would think of rescuing from the flames."

"Doubtless they must be very valuable," replied Dumont, taking a parting look at the portrait of the "prodigal son," as Celia scornfully named the picture that had so much attracted him.

He followed her round the gallery, and out once more into the hall, when they heard Mr. Grandford's voice from the study calling to them.

"Well, sir, Celia has shown you our gallery, I presume? I would give a good deal to look on the faces of my ancestors again; but I never shall in this world, sir."

And he groaned.

"Do not be so desponding, grandfather. You know Doctor A—bade you not give up all hope."

"Pshaw! just like them, a pack of knaves! Never trust a doctor, sir. They are only fit to deceive and flatter foolish women and children. Hope, indeed! No; I've put all that aside for many a day."

"Yet one hears of marvelous cures nowadays," replied Dumont, quietly.

"There's none for me, sir—none," he replied.

"I regret to hear you speak so decidedly, sir," he rejoined. "Now I must bid you good-by, for I have five miles to walk before I reach Ryfield."

"But my carriage—" began Mr. Grandford.

"Not for worlds! I love a walk, and think no more of five miles than many men of one," he replied. "Good-evening, sir! Good-by, Miss Saville!"

"But you will come again; name a day, I beg," said Mr. Grandford, on whom Geoffrey Dumont had evidently created a very favorable impression.

"If it would be convenient to Miss Saville—" he began.

"To Miss Saville! Am I not master here? What has Miss Saville to say to it?—she is nothing here; nothing till I am gone," said the old man, with a sudden burst of anger.

The tears came into Celia's eyes—tears of shame and anger. Geoffrey affected not to perceive them.

"On Thursday next then, if convenient to you, sir," he answered. And bowing to Celia he left the room.

"A good talker, and has seen the world. What is he like to look at, child?" asked Mr. Grandford, rubbing his hands gleefully together.

"Oh, he is tall and dark-eyed, and looks decidedly like a foreigner," replied Celia.

"Ah, ha! not good-looking enough to suit you, my lady, I suppose?" sneered the old man.

"On the contrary, he is good-looking—what I should call a handsome man. But we know nothing of him, grandfather," she answered.

"True; but he is a gentleman, I'll swear to that, although I can not see him, Celia. Did you show him all the pictures, child?"

"Yes, all," she returned.

"And which did he like best?" asked Mr. Grandford, eagerly.

"He admired yours and my grand-uncle's especially," replied Celia, knowing that the intelligence would please her grandfather.

"He did, did he? Shows his taste. And which besides?" he rejoined.

"Oh, Elizabeth Grandford's portrait and your nephew's. That seemed to strike him particularly."

Mr. Grandford's face fell.

"Well," he answered, after a pause, "it is not a badly-painted picture, though to me there is nothing particularly attractive in the face. Christopher was never a handsome fellow."

"Don't you think so?" asked Celia, carelessly. "He asked who it was, and I told him the history of the picture."

"And what did he say to it?" asked Mr. Grandford, eagerly.

"Nothing much; except that it was a sad one," she answered.

"Hum! it may be best to let that story rest, especially with strangers," he muttered, turning away with a dissatisfied growl. "Christopher was the black sheep of the family; what's the good of remembering his errors? Let them rest, do you mind?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Celia, nettled at his tone of command. "Cousin Christopher's errors are nothing to me; I will not relate his history again."

"Hum! that is as it may be," muttered the old man, between his teeth. "Did Mr. Dumont tell you anything more about himself?"

"Not a word," replied Celia.

"Ah, ha! they're sharp, those foreigners, from whatever part of the Old World they hail," retorted Mr. Grandford.

"He certainly seemed much more anxious to hear the history of our family than to relate that of his own," rejoined Celia, carelessly.

"Quite right, too. Take all you can and give nothing in return. That's their motto; and not a bad one either. Now, child, read me these papers, and then you may be off to bed if you choose."

So for the next two hours Celia read aloud, until, seeing her grandfather had fallen into a sound sleep, she retired to bed, weary and discontented, and feeling as if her grandfather's harsh words to her in the stranger's presence must have lowered her not a little in his estimation.

Geoffrey Dumont, in the days that followed, pitied Celia from the bottom of his heart, and for her sake spent many an hour in the old man's study. He strove hard to win her confidence and friendship; but Celia was reserved, and, it seemed to him, more distant to him than to any one who came to Cedar Grove. So, for some time, try as he would, he seemed to make no advance toward gaining her friendship.

It was a dangerous game he was playing, he felt. Hour after hour and day after day he was in her company—often alone; and though he felt each day how more and more dangerously dear she was growing to him, yet he dared not flatter himself that if he had parted from her at any moment she would have felt one pang of regret.

Sometimes, when he saw her sitting silent and thoughtful, her soft brown eyes filled with a sad, dreamy look, a sudden fear would fall on his heart that it was perhaps too late, and that Celia had given her love to another.

"I wish he were an American or an Englishman," Gerard Grandford had often thought; "he would be a good match for Celia; but I can't bear to think of Cedar Grove in the hands of a foreigner. I often wonder can the fellow or his people have ever met with my nephew, Christopher Grandford? He says he comes from Italy; but whoever he is, he's a gentleman, and wouldn't tell a lie; that I'll swear!"

CHAPTER IV.

A DOUBLE GAME.

MEANWHILE, spring was gradually changing to summer, and if things were going, on the whole, pretty smoothly at Cedar Grove, it was certainly not quite the same at Newport, where Mrs. Sutherland had gone for the benefit of the sea air, followed of course, by her admirer and devoted esquire, Captain Kingsborough.

Olivia, however, was displeased with her friend the captain. She imagined she saw a falling off in his attentions to her, so did her best to bring him to the point.

But she found it a harder task to accomplish than she had expected. She had prided herself for a year or two past on keeping the captain at a greater distance than was agreeable to him. She had snubbed him on various occasions, treated him coldly by the week together, flirted with other men before his eyes, but the patient captain had borne all these

things without complaining, and she had only to hold up her finger and the captain was at her side; but, for all that, she could not bring matters to a crisis, and the worry and disappointment made her even more fretful and exacting than usual.

She had made up her mind to marry Captain Kingsborough, and if six months earlier she had showed her intention as plainly as she did now she would have succeeded; but times had changed, and with them the captain had changed his mind. To speak plainly, he had lost a part of his very moderate fortune since their return from abroad, and it had been whispered in his ear that Olivia Sutherland, by marrying again, would forfeit the greater part of her wealth.

Moreover, the remembrance of Celia Saville sometimes rose before his eyes to trouble him. He admired her greatly, and when he contrasted her fresh beauty with the made-up face of Olivia, he would sigh gently, and conclude that poverty was indeed a curse. If Miss Saville only possessed a fortune, he would give up all thoughts of Olivia Sutherland; but Olivia had assured him that she was penniless, and, oddly enough, he never thought of (on this point) doubting her word.

After a three weeks' stay at Newport he obtained reliable information that if Mrs. Sutherland married again she would forfeit half her income.

"Hard lines—very hard lines!" he muttered. "That would leave her little more than three thousand a year, and she'd want to spend as much as that on dress and jewelry, and traveling about, and a thousand other things. I shouldn't better myself in the least by marrying her. Poor Olivia! she would have suited me very well, too, in some ways, not to mention that a wife with means helps a fellow on in the world. Heigh-ho! it can't be helped. I must retire gracefully, I suppose, and talk about undying friendship, and all that sort of thing."

And Captain Kingsborough was sad when he remembered he had spent the last two years chasing a chimera.

He lounged over to Mrs. Sutherland's hotel, however, at the usual hour, and found her sitting on the piazza, attired in an elaborate tea-gown that suited her to perfection.

"Ah, you naughty man," she said playfully; "I've been expecting you this hour past! How late you are! A year since, you would have been an hour earlier."

"Yes, I suppose I would," answered the captain. "Let's see; a year ago you were at Alderton, where we first met Miss Saville. By the way, have you heard of her lately?"

"No; not very lately," replied Olivia coldly. "Hum! Still living with that old man?"

"I conclude so," replied her ladyship. "But don't talk of her, George; I don't like thinking of her!" holding down her head with a childish little pout.

"You don't like thinking of her? Why?" asked the captain, with affected surprise.

"Because she—she set her cap at you! Now, don't pretend to say you didn't see it! Of course you saw it, and sometimes you used to make me—yes, I'm half-ashamed to tell you—absolutely jealous—there!"

"Jealous? My dear Mrs. Sutherland, what nonsense! You knew and know, and I know, too, to my cost, that I can't marry without money! I'm a poor devil!"

"Nonsense! Don't be absurd!" replied Olivia, turning, however, a shade paler. "But money or no money, she would have married you if she could."

"Do you think so?" said the captain, and there was a slight tone of eagerness in his voice that made Olivia tremble with anger.

"Of course," she replied, haughtily.

"By Jove!" returned the captain, with a harsh laugh; "she would have found it hard work living on a thousand a year, which is all I now have. She must be better off than that, even at her grandfather's."

"I don't know that at all," replied Mrs. Sutherland. "But don't talk of her! I tell you I shall never forget the daily agony she caused me! I was delighted to see the last of her!"

"I never should have guessed it," said the captain, raising his eyebrows.

"Ah, you don't half understand me yet. I never could endure any one who tried to—come between you and me!"

"That can never be!" he answered. "You will always be my best and dearest of friends, Olivia. Ah! you don't know what I would give to be able to call you by a still nearer and dearer title!"

"And why—why cannot you? You surely

know—" whispered Olivia, with a genuine blush on her cheeks.

"It is forbidden me," he replied, solemnly. "Fate is cruel to me. I am too poor to follow my own wishes, Olivia. I cannot marry without money, as you yourself have often told me. Nay, I must find some occupation—get some appointment—go abroad again."

"And leave me!" cried Olivia, the hot tears filling her eyes.

"Yes; I fear it must be so. What else can I do?" he replied.

"But—but what shall I do without you?" she cried, wringing her hands. "If you go abroad I shall never, never see you again! You may die, or be killed, or—"

"I shall never shrink from doing my duty, as a man should!" returned Captain Kingsborough, proudly. "My poor Olivia, I never imagined this. You must strive to forget me!"

"Never!—impossible! I had almost rather you had married Miss Saville. I wish—I wish—"

"Do you wish I had married another, Olivia? You have no conception of the pain I am suffering now."

"Pain? I don't believe in the pain! It is I who am suffering, and I have no one to help me!" said Olivia, bursting into very real tears.

"You are cruel; you have deceived me!"

The captain had not expected such an outburst as this. He looked very solemn, and sat down beside her, and took her hand.

"I could never make up my mind to bring you to poverty, Olivia," he said, "and to see you suffering for my sake!"

"Ah, I see; it is because I am poor you leave me!" she cried.

"No; it is because I am poor," he answered. "I can bear poverty alone, but not for worlds would I drag you down into its depths; I should be ashamed. It would be unjust, unmanly; and—and I feel the hour for tearing myself away from your too dangerous fascinations is come, and though my heart is breaking, I must go where duty calls me!"

"To Miss Saville, I suppose?" retorted Mrs. Sutherland sullenly, with a sarcastic expression on her face. "You never were the same to me since the day you first saw her. But if you marry her, I will be revenged," she added, clenching her little hands convulsively. "I will be revenged, were she twenty times Gerard Grandford's heiress!"

She could have bitten out her tongue the moment she had let these words slip out of her mouth; but they were said, and she had recourse to another fit of weeping.

The captain eyed her with a strange expression, as she lay sobbing, with her face buried in the sofa-cushions; but suddenly a strange look of triumph spread for a moment over his face.

"That is it, is it?" he thought. "She has been deceiving me all this time, has she? But I have forced her secret from her at last!"

"Olivia," he said, at length, quietly, "you do me wrong. I knew of Miss Saville's prospects—for that is all they can be called—but, as you well know, it is not she I would marry, but you, if I only could."

"And—and—" sobbed Mrs. Sutherland.

"I cannot! Oh, why do you add so cruelly to the pain of this, perhaps one of our last meetings for a long, long time?" he interrupted.

A knock at this moment was heard at the front door.

Olivia started up from the sofa, quickly wiped away her tears, and arranged her frills and laces.

"Early callers, I suppose?" said Captain Kingsborough.

"Mrs. Astor, my dear George—the millionaire's wife. I knew the dear creature would call on me as soon as she arrived, and before any one else, and here she is!"

The door opened, and a small, stout, overdressed woman entered, whom Olivia embraced with rapture, during which performance Captain Kingsborough cleverly managed to beat a retreat.

"I wonder whether my loss or Mrs. Astor's not calling would inflict the greatest pain on her?" he mused. "Gad! women are heartless creatures, certainly. Well, I shall leave to-morrow and go and look up the pretty heiress. I think I made an impression in that quarter last winter. I'm well out of this affair, although I confess her tears seemed so real that my heart felt quite soft when I saw them. Poor Olivia!"

The captain walked slowly up and down the promenade, wearing his most cheerful air; and a couple of hours later wrote a heartrending farewell to Olivia, which he took good care should not reach her till after he left Newport next morning.

"Pshaw! gone to New York. Well, we shall see him back again in a few days, no doubt," she said to herself, contemptuously, as she tossed the letter aside.

Mrs. Astor having brought a large party of friends with her to her cottage, Olivia passed the next fortnight very gayly without finding time to be surprised that Captain Kingsborough had neither come back nor written, and Mrs. Astor invited her to visit her in her city home, and for the next two weeks she had hardly time to think of him again.

"How strange! I used to think I could not get on without him," she thought to herself, one evening when she was putting on a bracelet, his gift in former days. "I wonder what could have made me so foolish? Henry Astor, though a widower, and not so good-looking as poor George, is really charming; and if his mother didn't look so sharply after him, I believe he—"

And Mrs. Sutherland smiled in a self-satisfied manner as she looked at herself in the glass.

Sea air had certainly done wonders for her. She was looking infinitely better and younger than she had done a month before.

CHAPTER V.

HER FIRST LOVE.

GEOFFRY DUMONT had now quite established himself at Ryfield. He had taken rooms in the one little old-fashioned hotel the village possessed; had brought down a capital team from New York, and appeared to have no intention of quitting his comfortable quarters.

On one or two occasions he made short visits to the city, and it was evident Mr. Grandford missed him sadly during his absence. Even Celia felt glad when he returned. He was not her hero, it is true. He did not occupy the place in her heart or imagination that some one else did—some one whom she began to fancy had quite forgotten her; nay, who, perhaps, in spite of many soft speeches and flattering words, whispered on moonlight evenings beneath the myrtles and olive-trees of the Riviera but a few months before, had never really cared for her, treating her only as he had done out of simple kindness of heart, when he had seen her hurt and put out by Mrs. Sutherland's capricious temper or vexing ways.

Captain Kingsborough was Celia's hero, not Geoffrey Dumont.

Nevertheless, when she gauged the worth of the two men, as she sometimes did, she had to confess that in real sterling qualities Geoffrey Dumont was her hero's superior. True, he lacked the fascinating manners, the soft voice, the *distingue* air, that spoke of familiarity with the fashionable world, and that characterized the captain; yet he was infinitely more straightforward and trustworthy than his rival. Would Captain Kingsborough have spent hour after hour in whiling away the tedious hours for her grandfather, even for her sake? Would he have put himself to as much trouble and inconvenience as Geoffrey often did to do her the slightest service? She knew he would not; but yet, for all that, she allowed herself to look on the captain as a brilliant star in her heaven, and on poor Geoffrey as quite a lesser light.

"I am very foolish," she thought, at the close of a long summer day, when her grandfather had been more irritable than usual. "Mr. Dumont is the only person I ever met who is always good to me; yet I am constantly saying hard things to him. Were it not for his care of grandfather, what should I do? Yet, for all the service he renders him, I give him nothing but sharp speeches. He is so good—so noble and kind! Why can not I behave better to him, I wonder? I feel ashamed of myself."

And she leaned back heavily in her chair.

"I will try to behave better to him in the future," she thought. "I ought to be obliged to him, I know, for telling me, or rather making me see, my faults in the quiet way he does. But I feel aggrieved at him instead. I will try hard to improve."

The day after this resolution was made, Celia was so gentle to the young man that he felt his heart full of hope and joy.

One afternoon, as they were on the lawn before the study windows, Celia gathering a great bunch of roses from the laden trees, and Geoffrey holding her flower-laden basket for her, the sound of wheels was heard on the gravel, and a carriage drove up to the door.

A moment after, and the footman brought his young mistress a card. She blushed crimson, and her hand trembled as she read the name engraved on it.

"Captain Kingsborough! Fancy his being here!" she said, in a low, trembling voice.

"I saw him two or three days ago at Alder-

ton," replied Geoffry, as if the captain's arrival was a matter of no interest to him.

"You did, and you never told me?" cried Celia, biting her lips as soon as she had let slip the words. "I suppose I shall have to introduce him to grandfather," she added, in an unsteady voice.

"Certainly, if you wish him to repeat his visit," he replied, dryly; "and I shall go and prepare Mr. Grandford. I think I hear him moving."

Sae could hardly turn the handle of the door, so great was her agitation; and it was almost a relief to her when the captain greeted her with his usual polite manner, and with no particular effusion in tone or address.

"Delighted to meet you again, my dear Miss Celia! How well you are looking—really charming! Allow me to tell you I think the air of your native place and the freedom and quiet of this lovely country suit you far better than the glare and noise and glitter of those foreign watering-places we visited together with poor Mrs. Sutherland."

"Poor Mrs. Sutherland! What is wrong with her?" cried Celia.

"Wrong? Oh, nothing. A little disappointed, that's all"—with an air of knowing reticence. "She rather imagined, I fancy, that I was going to remain at Newport all the season. She sometimes reckons a little without her host, and really seems to consider it to be my duty to remain forever at her elbow. She has been a beauty, you know, and expects everybody to worship at her shrine. Do you remember that night at Lorrento, how angry she was with us for leaving her?"

"I remember it very well," she replied, blushing; and the captain, man of the world that he was, understood perfectly from her reply that during the months that had passed since she had parted from him at Oldford Junction, she had never forgotten him. The discovery flattered and charmed him, and he became more and more confidential in his manner to Celia, who, in the pleasure of seeing him, had quite forgotten the existence of her grandfather or Geoffry Dumont, till she looked up and saw the eyes of the latter fixed on her with a half-pitying, half-stern gaze.

She started and turned crimson. How long had he been there? How was it she had not heard him enter?

"Excuse me," she said, falteringly. "Captain Kingsborough, allow me to introduce you to Mr. Dumont, a friend of grandfather's."

The captain bowed superciliously; Geoffry with icy coldness. He had seen the happy light in Celia's eyes as she talked to the new-comer, and his heart had turned cold with a sickening despair. She had worn a smile for him that Geoffry had never seen on her face before. Could it be true, what he had at times feared, that Celia's heart was not her own? Was he too late? And was this *roue* man of the world, whose character he seemed to read at a glance, his successful rival?

He controlled himself, however, and Celia nei her saw nor guessed at the agony he was suffering, as he said, in a quiet voice, "Mr. Grandford asked me to tell you, Miss Saville, that he was ready to receive his guest."

"Let me take you to my grandfather, then, Captain Kingsborough," said Celia, eagerly, for she felt uncomfortable in Geoffry's presence. "He is quite blind, and—and rather peculiar—an invalid, you know; and never leaves his study even when his most intimate friends call on him. You will not mind following me?"

"It would be my delight to follow you to the ends of the earth!" he replied, gallantly; adding, in a lower voice, as he left the room, "Where else could I find so fair a leader?"

Captain Kingsborough soon made himself at home with Mr. Grandford. He soon discovered that the old man loved to talk over the tales and scandals of bygone days, and took an interest in those that were going on in the present time; and the captain, being well up in the gossip of fashionable society, had little difficulty in keeping his host amused for an hour or two, and left him, promising to return again in a day or so, at his pressing request.

Meanwhile, Celia had stolen away from the study to her own room, with a happy heart. Her hero had not forgotten her after all, and after all it was not Mrs. Sutherland that he loved. Could it be that he loved her? The thought she felt to be almost an audacious one, for she had raised this poor idol of clay on such a high pedestal in her little heart, that she considered herself quite beneath him, and looked on any attention from him as an honor.

She saw him an hour later drive away, with-

out having the courage to run down stairs and bid him good-by; but as soon as the carriage was out of sight, a sudden revulsion of feeling caused her to burst into tears.

"I shall never see him again, perhaps," she thought.

Then the image of Geoffry Dumont rose before her, and she remembered the sad, stern smile that she had seen on his lips when she left him two hours before in the drawing-room.

"Poor Mr. Dumont!" she thought. "I have left him alone all this time. What a shame! He will be hurt, and I like him well enough not to wish to hurt him. Yes, I like him a thousand times better than I did when he first came, and yet—"

She paused. She knew her liking for Captain Kingsborough was quite different to her liking for Geoffry Dumont; but still, as she thought of Geoffry's many excellent qualities, of his kindness, gentleness, self-denial, and sweet temper, his handsome face and figure, she could not quite settle in her own mind how it was she found Captain Kingsborough so much his superior.

"It must be that he has seen the world, and moved in better society than poor Mr. Dumont. Not that I do not like Mr. Dumont as grandfather once hinted. Quite the contrary. Still, there is a difference. But I must go down now, and see if grandfather wants me, and apologize to Mr. Dumont for leaving him alone so long."

She ran down-stairs to the study, but looked around in vain for Mr. Dumont.

"What! you left him alone all the time I was talking to Captain Kingsborough?" cried Mr. Grandford. "I suppose you thought he would dangle about alone till it pleased you to come to him? Of course he's gone home, and I shall have no one to read to me to-night."

"Can't I?" began Celia.

"No, you can't," retorted Mr. Grandford.

"The books are beyond you; you would stammer and stutter at every other word. But sit down now, and tell me all you know about this Captain Kingsborough; he's an amusing man, full of talk, and has seen the world. Excellent family, too. I remember his grandfather, Eastman Fordham, years ago—a great stock-gambler in his day. His father, Harry Kingsborough—I've seen him. I've heard there was some kind of engagement between him and your fine friend, Olivia Sutherland. Is it so?"

"No; I think—I believe there is nothing in the tale," faltered Celia.

"Oh, indeed—indeed!" replied the old man, musingly. "Well, it is pleasant to meet a man of the world again in this out-of-the-way place."

"There's Mr. Dumont!" said Celia.

"A very clever, good fellow, my dear, but decidedly not a man of the world, in my sense of the word. A foreigner, too," he answered.

"Yes; that's a pity. Americans are so much—"

"Psha! What do you know about it, child?" interrupted Mr. Grandford, scornfully. "Still, it is a pity Geoffry Dumont is not an American."

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD FRIEND.

"I SHALL lose her; she will really give her heart to that fortune-hunter—that base, heartless fellow who has stepped in between us," thought Geoffry Dumont, a month later; "and he does not love her! It is only her fortune he wants. He believes she is her grandfather's heiress, otherwise I am sure he would not wish to marry her."

Geoffry sunk into a deep fit of thought as he caught sight of Captain Kingsborough and Celia walking together across the garden and out into the lawn. He very seldom accompanied her on her walks now; the captain always managed to be beforehand with him. He was losing, too, his place in Mr. Grandford's estimation, he felt. The captain's racy stories and glib flow of gossip amused the old man far more than his more sober talk, and he felt that he was *de trop* in the study of an evening, where formerly he had been such a welcome guest.

Just at this time Geoffry received a letter from an old friend, a man of some distinction in art, who had come over to America for the autumn and winter, and taken up his abode in New York, begging him to come to town and pay him a visit. Geoffry hesitated to accept the invitation, though he longed to see his friend again. The thought of leaving Celia alone with her grandfather and Captain Kingsborough filled him with uneasiness. Besides, the doctors had decided to perform an operation for cataract on Mr. Grandford's eyes, and the old

man had long ago made him promise to be present.

But things had now altered, and Mr. Grandford was quite willing to dispense with his company. Captain Kingsborough had seen the same sort of thing successfully performed on an old brother officer, and had kindly promised to be with him.

Celia was of no use, and he was sending her to stay with a distant relative in a neighboring town; and if Mr. Dumont had business in New York, Mr. Grandford trusted he would not put himself out on his account.

So a day or two later he called to say good-by to Celia and her grandfather. He found the former in tears, and hastened to inquire the cause of her grief. How he wished that his departure had given rise to it; but he knew better now, and the hope that he had touched her heart had long ago faded away. Yet if Celia had only known—if she could only have imagined or dreamed who and what he was, and why he had come to America and to Alderton; if she could but for a moment have looked into his heart, and seen how deep and true his love for her was; seen, from the first moment of their chance meeting in the hotel, he had felt his heart go out to her;—if she could have seen all this but for an instant, together with all he had dared to win her love, surely she would have felt, if not love in return, yet some sort of regard and pity for him.

"What is wrong with you, Miss Celia?" he said, gently looking at her with pitying eyes.

She rose from her chair, and dashed the tears from her eyes.

"Why are you here?" she asked, almost angrily. "Cannot I have my cry out in peace?"

"Certainly. I did not mean to intrude; I only came to say good-by, Miss Saville," he answered, quietly. "That done, I will free you of my presence," he added, bitterly.

"Ob, forgive me!" she replied, repentantly.

"Are you going, too, Mr. Dumont? I did not know it before."

"No; my departure is rather sudden; but it will not be for long. I shall probably be here again in a month's time, or less."

"And I am to be away a month—a whole month, too," she answered. "I don't know how I shall bear it."

He sighed.

"Your grandfather thought it better for you to be away while the doctors are here and until he has recovered from the operation. I should have imagined you would have been glad of a change."

"Why? I am quite happy as I am. I did not wish to be sent out of the house just—just—"

And the tears rose to her eyes again.

"No; I can understand well enough why you do not wish to leave," he returned, bitterly.

"And why, pray?" she cried, her cheeks flaming and her eyes sparkling.

"Do you think I am quite blind? Do you think I have no feelings?" he returned, hotly. "Can I not see who it is that has come between us? Ah, how differently you have treated me since he has been here, Miss Saville!"

"He? Ah, I presume you allude to the captain?" retorted Celia, indignantly. "I think, unless I am making a great mistake, that Captain Kingsborough was my friend before I ever had the pleasure of your acquaintance, and I don't think I ever gave you the right to—to speak in this way to me, Mr. Dumont."

"Perhaps not; no, I have no right," he replied, quietly, his anger dying out. "Yet we were friends once—before he came."

The disdainful accent he put on the word irritated Celia.

"Acquaintances of very short standing, say rather," she answered, sarcastically.

"Celia!" he cried, such pain and grief in his voice that her heart smote her, though outwardly she preserved her cold, cruel demeanor.

"Mr. Dumont!" she replied, in the same sarcastic tone, heightened by a touch of surprise.

"Miss Saville, excuse me, if you looked on me all this time as a mere acquaintance, I am sorry both for myself and you. Good-by; I am foolish for having intruded on your solitude, and I will leave you," he replied, sternly, his eyes fixed on hers.

They fell before his gaze, and again she felt how cruel her words had been. She would have spoken, but in a moment more he was gone, and then sinking down again on her seat, she wept bitterly.

Never perhaps had she liked Dumont so sincerely as at that moment, when she knew that she had wounded him to the quick. Never had she felt such regret for her unkind words as she felt

when she heard him crossing the hall. She knew his horse was at the door, and that in another moment he would be gone.

She started up as if to rush after him and say a kind word before he left her, but she heard the trampling of the horse's hoofs on the gravel, and he was off; it was too late.

Twelve hours later and Geoffry was in New York with his old friend, who being a man of note had been introduced in the most cultivated circles in town.

"You must come with me to-day, my dear Geoffry," he said, "and call on Mrs. Olivia Sutherland. She—"

"Mrs. Sutherland!" said Geoffry, with a start. "I've heard a great deal of Mrs. Olivia Sutherland, and I should not have thought—"

"That she was the sort of person I should care for."

"You are quite right," rejoined Mr. Barelo; "but she has a charming country woman of ours staying with her, and—"

"Oh! that alters the case," replied Geoffry, with a smile. "Let us go, by all means."

And the entrance of the servant, who came to announce that the carriage was at the door, prevented him from asking the lady's name.

"Mrs. Sutherland, let me introduce my friend, Mr. Geoffry Dumont," said Mr. Barelo as they entered Olivia's luxurious drawing-room.

"My dear Mrs. Lintoni, my friend Mr. Dumont."

Geoffry bowed in a preoccupied manner; his eyes were fixed on the tall, delicate-looking woman whom his friend had addressed as Mrs. Lintoni. He recognized her at once, though they had not met for years, and at a glance he saw she recognized him.

"I think—yes—we have met before, Mr. Geoffry."

And she hesitated.

"Geoffry Dumont!" he said, with emphasis.

"Yes, Mrs. Lintoni, I remember you well."

And he shook her hand.

"Don't say a word; I will explain!" he muttered, as Mrs. Sutherland turned to introduce some other visitors to Mr. Barelo.

She nodded, and turned to speak to one of the new-comers, while Mrs. Sutherland accosted him.

"Where have I seen you before, for I am sure I have seen you? My poor head is sadly bewildered to-day" (and she sniffed at her smelling-bottle), "or I should remember—Ah! to be sure!—I remember now; it was—"

"At the Hotel, and afterward in the train. You were right, Mrs. Sutherland, you see, as to my being a foreigner."

And he laughed.

"Yes, I can tell an Italian at a glance, and have the greatest admiration for your country and countrymen. Sit down here beside me, Mr. Dumont, and tell me how you find my country and countrymen. Where have you been all this time? And how is it I have never met you in New York before?" said Mrs. Sutherland with the most gracious volubility.

"Because I have been in the country ever since the season began," he replied.

"Ah! I remember! You got out at Oldford Junction, to be sure!" she answered, something telling her that it must be in the neighborhood of Alderton he had been staying.

"Yes; I have been at Ryfield," he answered, "and—"

"And have you met my friends the Grandfords, my darling Celia, the—"

"Yes; I have been often at Cedar Grove, and have had the pleasure of seeing a good deal of the Grandfords," he answered, while Mrs. Lintoni looked at him for an instant with a glance of sharp inquiry, and then continued her conversation with Mr. Barelo.

"Indeed! And you admire dear Celia, of course; and she is the old man's heiress, you know. Has she many admirers? Is she engaged to be married?" asked Mrs. Sutherland.

"So much beauty cannot pass unadmired," replied Geoffry, with a smile; "but I do not think Miss Saville is engaged. She is away just now, visiting some friends; but Captain Kingsborough is still in Alderton with her grandfather."

"Captain Kingsborough in Alderton?" cried Olivia, her face flushing a little. "And is he—is he likely to carry off the fair heiress?"

"Ho! ho!" laughed General Paulet, a short, stout little man with a jolly face. "So Kingsborough's heiress-hunting is he? That's why we've heard nothing of him for so long, faith! He was hard hit at G—last spring. Wants to repair his shattered fortunes, I suppose."

"Kingsborough always was a sly dog,"

laughed another. "Never looked at a woman unless she had money. What may Miss—the fair heiress's fortune be—Mrs. Sutherland?"

"I don't know—I can't say," replied Olivia, "but she's a sweet girl, and it's a shame she should become the dupe of a fortune-hunter. He races, does he, general? How shocking! He deserves to lose his money. Poor Celia! But the old grandfather might alter his mind any day, and leave her nothing. Captain Kingsborough may be deceiving himself. He had better take care."

"By Jove, my lady," replied the general, "I don't envy the poor girl who gets George Kingsborough for a husband. Men are selfish as a rule, but Kingsborough beats any man I ever met. As to a heart—ho! ho!—if he has any—which I doubt—it must be but a very battered remains. He's always been making love to one woman or another since I've known him, and that's for twenty years."

"And what do you think of him, Mr. Dumont?" asked Mrs. Sutherland, turning round.

But Geoffry had left her side, and was in close conversation with Mrs. Lintoni at the other end of the rooms. They were evidently old friends.

"So he's making love to that foolish girl, all for her money!" said Olivia to herself, as, one after another, her guests having departed, she found herself alone. "And I was fool enough to believe he loved me six months ago, and to feel sorry when we parted! If I had had a fortune that he could have got hold of he would have married me; as I had not, he threw me over. Most people would say it was a good thing for me he did so; but he hurt my feelings, and—and I will be revenged! He shall not marry that silly girl, I vow! I will prevent it!"

Olivia then thought of the letter the captain had written her the day he left Newport. It was safe in a corner of her sandal-wood desk.

She would manage to pay a visit to Alderton and upset the captain's matrimonial plans if she could.

She was a frivolous little woman, but an excellent hater; and the idea of paying out Captain Kingsborough for deserting her was delightful to her to contemplate.

"I only hope I shall not find her so infatuated with George that she will refuse to believe the evidences of her eyes and senses, and will vow that she believes he never really loved till he saw her, and all that rubbish. Faugh! how foolish girls are! But, at any rate, I will put a spoke in his wheel."

After making this amiable resolve, Olivia retired to her dressing-room, to be arrayed for a grand dinner-party at her friend, Mrs. Astor's.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TURN OF FORTUNE'S WHEEL.

"So it seems you and Mrs. Lintoni are old friends, Dumont?" said Mr. Barelo, as they drove away from Mrs. Sutherland's. "You had a long conversation with her. Is she not charming?"

"It is many years ago that I met Mrs. Lintoni. I wonder she recognized me," said Geoffry, in a musing tone, in reply. "I should have known her anywhere. She is little altered during the ten years that have elapsed since we met. But I was only a boy of seventeen. Odd!—she says it was my voice, which she declares is like my mother's, that recalled me at once to her memory."

"Ah, she was a friend of your mother's, was she?" replied the other. "That accounts for it. Ten years, and that beard that you take such tender care of must have altered you considerably; but ten years have done little to mar Mrs. Lintoni's beauty. I think often she throws many a woman much her junior into the shade."

"I can fancy it," replied Geoffry. "How artificial and made-up Mrs. Sutherland looked beside her; yet I guess they must be about the same age."

"Ha! ha! Mrs. Sutherland would not thank you for that speech, my dear boy. She looks on Mrs. Lintoni as quite her elder. Do you know that one time, as I am told, she intended to marry the very Captain Kingsborough she and her friends were talking over this afternoon, but for some reason things came to a sudden determination, and he cried off? Not, I suppose, that anything they said of him was harder than he deserved."

"I fear Celia—Miss Saville—would not agree with you," said Geoffry, bitterly. "I think he has only to go in and win, and—"

Mr. Barelo looked at him anxiously.

"Geoffry, my dear boy, how stupid I have been! Fancy my not seeing before—"

"That I love Celia Saville? Yes; it is too

true!" he replied, sadly. "And she prefers—she—but I cannot believe—" he began. "She has known Captain Kingsborough for months. She traveled with him and Mrs. Sutherland last winter. He has had the start of me, you see," replied Geoffry, with a groan.

"But the man is simply seeking her fortune, Geoffry. You must stop him. You can—you—"

"Yes; but would that give me her heart, Barelo? If I cannot gain that, why should I try and come between her and the man she loves, and who perhaps loves her?"

"Hum! her fortune, more probably, I'm a bad hand at giving advice in these matters; but I should say it would be a kindness if—"

"No, no! I could not. I understand you, Barelo, but I feel it's impossible!" sighed Geoffry.

"Well, you know best; but"—and he brightened up—"consult Mrs. Lintoni, my dear boy. Women can see further into these matters and understand them better than men. I conjecture, from what I saw to-night, that Mrs. Lintoni knows—"

"Yes, or guesses, or divines—which is all the same—all about me. I will consult her, as you say; but, mind, I will do nothing to injure or distress Celia."

"Would it be injuring her, or the reverse?" retorted Mr. Barelo. "Believe me, Dumont, there is no life so miserable as that of a woman who finds the man she loves has married her for greed. If you can save her from such a fate, do so."

"I will talk to Mrs. Lintoni; I can promise no more," returned Geoffry, firmly.

So Mr. Barelo let the subject drop, though he by no means put it out of his mind.

Mrs. Lintoni's thoughts that evening, as she sat alone in her friend's boudoir (she had declined Mrs. Astor's dinner) ran much in the same groove as Mr. Barelo's. She was quite unprepared for the news she was to hear next morning, when Mrs. Sutherland, in her dressing-gown, her fluffy hair hanging in tangled masses over her shoulders, burst into the room where she was breakfasting alone, carrying a large black-edged, business-like letter in her hand.

"Oh, my darling Mrs. Lintoni!" she cried, half laughing, half in tears—tears of joy and not of sorrow, however, as Mrs. Lintoni quickly perceived—"congratulate me. My old aunt—my mother's sister—the one who made that dreadful, awful *mesalliance*, you know, fifty years ago—is dead, and has left me all her money—five hundred thousand dollars, Mrs. Lintoni, all made in soap-fat, of course. But I don't care about that. Why, I shall be—I am—one of the richest widows in the city!"

"My dear, I congratulate you, of course," replied Mrs. Lintoni;—"but your poor aunt—"

"Oh, it's very sad; and I must, of course, put on mourning, much as I detest black. It is a color that doesn't suit me a bit, but I needn't keep it on for long. Oh, won't Mrs. Astor be sorry now that—that— But it won't be too late yet."

"What a fortunate thing for me that aunt died just when she did!"

"My dear Mrs. Sutherland!" remonstrated Mrs. Lintoni.

"Oh, I'm shocking you, I know," continued Mrs. Sutherland, with a little laugh. "But, really, you can't expect me to care much for an aunt whom I have not seen since I was a child, and who disgraced herself by marrying the way she did, although it's turned out a lucky thing for me that she did. But I'm sure I shall get more pleasure out of her five hundred thousand dollars than she ever did, poor old thing!"

"Perhaps you will," returned Mrs. Lintoni, with a smile; "but such wealth is a great responsibility, my dear. You have it in your power to do much good or ill with it."

"Ill!" laughed the other; "What harm can I possibly do to any one with it, you dear creature? I'll promise to subscribe to a dozen charities, if you like, and you shall choose them—there! That will be doing good; and, as to my friends, what parties I shall be able to give!—By the way, I've never ordered the blinds to be drawn down, or given the servants to understand I cannot see any one to-day, except, of course, my most intimate friends. Excuse me, dear, and I'll just explain it to them."

All in a flutter and flurry, Olivia flew downstairs to her morning-room. A sudden thought made her flush, and seat herself in an arm-chair.

"I can punish him well now!" she thought. "He shall not marry Celia Saville, and I will not marry him! No, no; he'll give her up soon enough when he hears of my good fortune, but

I have higher game to fly at than Captain George now. With such a fortune, even Mrs. Astor would not object to me as a daughter-in-law; and last year her son was willing enough—Oh, I made an impression there, I know, only his mother interfered, and he had to obey! Let me see; I think I'll go out of town in a week or so—run down to Alderton, and go over to Cedar Grove, and see if it is really true what that handsome young Italian said of George and the heiress, and see what I can do to pay him out."

She sat some time longer in deep thought, a triumphant smile on her lips, and then she gave her orders and sat down to write some letters.

A few hours later a note was brought to Mrs. Lintoni. She read it quietly through, wrote an answer, and then went up to her room, and putting on her bonnet and cloak, went out alone, taking the direction of the park.

"What! Mrs. Lintoni has gone out?" cried Mrs. Sutherland, as she woke up from an after-luncheon nap, and rung the bell to ask where her friend was. "How inconsiderate of her when I can't see visitors!—except, of course, Mrs. Astor, if she should call, or—Mr. Barelo, or Mr. Dumont," she added to the servant.

Mrs. Sutherland had not very long to wait at home in solitude, however. In half an hour a carriage, with a driver and footman, drove up to the door, and Mrs. Astor was announced.

"Your house looks positively funereal, Mrs. Sutherland," she remarked, as she entered.

Then noticing Olivia's suddenly assumed air of grief, and observing that she held a tiny lace handkerchief to her eyes, she added, hastily: "But there is not anything really wrong, is there?"

"Alas! yes, my dear Mrs. Astor," she replied. "My aunt, my only relation (though for family reasons we didn't acknowledge her), is gone; she died yesterday."

"Dear me! I never knew you had an aunt living," replied the other, curiously. "I never heard you speak of her."

"She was my dear mother's only sister," replied Olivia, sadly, "and she has shown her affection for me by leaving me all she has."

"Indeed! Dear me! How suddenly these things happen, my dear! It must have been a shock for you. But her fortune?"

"It is ample—more than ample to satisfy my small wants, dear Mrs. Astor!" replied Olivia. "Not that I, with my simple ways, require much, you know."

"Hum!—perhaps," replied her friend, who, as Olivia well knew, was dying to hear all about it, and to learn the exact sum. "What might she have left you, my dear? Another thousand a year or so would make you very comfortable, and—"

"Ah! but it is more than that. And, as Mrs. Lintoni said this morning, great wealth is a responsibility."

"Great wealth?" said Mrs. Astor, raising her eyebrows.

"Yes, great wealth; at least to a person with my humble ideas, dear friend. Five hundred thousand dollars."

"Five hundred thousand dollars!" cried the other, starting up. "My dearest child, I congratulate you!"

"It may even be a little more," continued Olivia, carelessly, after returning her embrace with warmth; "the lawyers don't quite know yet. There may be an odd thirty or forty thousand more. She had property to a large amount in the West, and its value has greatly increased."

"My dear, it's splendid—princely, you know! My son has gone on a trip out West, and I expect him back from there in a fortnight. It was to tell you this I came to see you to-day. We shall hope to have you at our home on the Hudson for a long visit this autumn, my love."

Olivia bowed and blushed, and said she would be charmed. Then added, hastily, "This must be a secret between us for the present, my dear friend; till after the funeral, at any rate."

"Of course, of course; quite right, my dear!" she replied.

And after a few minutes of gossip, she rose to say good-by.

"But haven't you been out to-day, my dear? Put on your bonnet, and take a turn with me. It will do you good; and nobody has heard of your sad loss yet."

Olivia hesitated, but finally allowed herself to be persuaded, and was presently seated in the carriage beside her friend.

"Why," she cried, as they turned into the Park, "there is Mrs. Lintoni walking with that handsome Mr. Dumont. That is why she stole out so quietly, then!"

"What! you have that Italian woman stay-

ing with you still, my dear?" said Mrs. Astor. "And who may Mr. Dumont be?"

"Oh, an Italian too; an old friend, I believe. You remember Miss Saville, who traveled with me last year—old Gerard Grandford's heiress? He's been staying with them lately, and I hear—"

Olivia stopped suddenly.

"Mr. Gerard Grandford! He inherited an immense property from his brother, and there was a queer story about his brother's son, who ran away, and was never heard of again. A very good old family, my dear. Miss Saville is his heiress, I suppose? But what did you hear? You were saying—"

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" replied Olivia. "Only that Captain Kingsborough—"

"Odious man!" ejaculated Mrs. Astor. "Don't have anything to do with him, my dear; he is a fortune-hunter."

"And, in consequence, is making up to Gerard Grandford's heiress, my pretty Celia," laughed Olivia.

But the laugh was not very genuine, as the quick-witted lady beside her saw.

"No, child! No relation of mine should marry a man like Captain Kingsborough," she continued. "I remember your pretty Celia, and I pity her."

"So do I. But what could Mrs. Lintoni and Mr. Dumont have been talking of so earnestly? I never saw Flavia Lintoni look so interested before."

"Oh, exchanging the last New York gossip, I suppose," replied the other.

"There they are again!" cried Olivia. "Don't they look as if they were hatching a conspiracy? I'll make Flavia tell me every word Mr. Dumont has told her."

"What, are you jealous? Has the handsome Italian made an impression on your tender little heart, child?" said her friend, with a touch of scorn. "But it's curious," she added. "Who is it that he reminds me of, I wonder? Some one I have seen in the days of my youth—years and years ago."

"A chance resemblance, I fancy," rejoined Olivia.

"Possibly. Now here we are at your door, my dear, and now we must part. I'll come and see you on Friday."

"Adieu! A thousand thanks!" replied Olivia, tripping gayly into the house. "I don't mean to be here on Friday, however, if I can help it," she added to herself as the carriage drove off. "I am not afraid you will put any further hindrance in my way of becoming your son's wife, so I can afford to give a little time to bringing about George Kingsborough's punishment. I shall probably go down to Alderton on Friday. Ah, here is Mrs. Lintoni! Now to find out what was the subject of her conversation with Geoffrey Dumont."

"We were merely talking over old times," said Mrs. Lintoni, soberly, when Mrs. Sutherland rallied her on the earnestness of her face as she talked with Dumont. "I knew his mother—that is the great tie between us."

"And he told you no more of Celia and George Kingsborough?"

"Nothing new. He fears she loves him, and that he will marry her. I tell him he should not permit it."

"How can he prevent it?" asked Mrs. Sutherland.

"Well, he could marry her himself," said Mrs. Lintoni, evasively.

"Nonsense! Mr. Grandford would never permit it!" cried Olivia. "He has a hatred of foreigners!"

"I am not so sure of that!" was Mrs. Lintoni's answer.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOREWARNED.

MEANWHILE, at Cedar Grove, the doctors had arrived who were to perform the operation by which they hoped to restore to Mr. Grandford the use of his eyes.

It was successfully gone through, and it was hoped that if the old man would but have sufficient patience to remain for a certain time without removing the bandages from his eyes, the cure might be perfect.

All the time Captain Kingsborough tended him carefully, and by his amusing conversation managed to keep him quiet.

He had prevailed on Mr. Grandford to allow Celia to return; and when Mrs. Sutherland, as she had threatened, arrived at Alderton, she was on the point of leaving the house of the friend with whom she had been staying and of returning to her home.

When Olivia appeared in the homely little drawing-room of the old maiden lady, her hostess, her appearance gave Celia a thrill almost of pain. Why, she could hardly explain. There was a look of mischief in her eyes, an eagerness in her demeanor that made her divine she was the bearer of some evil news.

"What ages it is since we have met, my dear Celia!" she said, after the first greetings were exchanged. "I have often longed to see you; but I have been so much engaged, I found it impossible to get away. And now—but we are alone, my dear—I have something to speak to you about in private. Take me somewhere where we shall not be disturbed."

"Let us go into the garden, then," said Celia, her heart beating violently. "We are not likely to be interrupted there. Miss Cressey never goes out at this hour."

"Very well. How charming you are looking, Celia!—only a shade paler than usual. What a lovely old garden! Let us seat ourselves here in the shade."

They sat down on a bench at the end of an avenue of lime-trees.

"Celia, my dear child, it is for your good I have come down here. I have come to warn you!"—dropping her voice to a solemn whisper.

"To warn me!—of what?" asked Celia, with an almost scornful smile. "Am I in any danger then, Mrs. Sutherland?"

"Certainly; in the greatest danger. I come to warn you against the designs of a fortune-hunter—against George Kingsborough."

Celia turned pale, then flushed angrily.

"Who told you Captain Kingsborough had designs on my fortune? Who has turned you against him—you, who used to be his friend, and for whom he had such a regard?" she cried.

"His friend! Yes, I was his friend once, certainly, and I might have been more; but I learned in time his true character, and dismissed him. It was not me he loved, but my money."

"He loved you!" cried Celia, starting up.

"Certainly; or he said he did, and I might have been his wife by this time; but I circulated a report that if I married again I should forfeit my fortune, and he left me, not three weeks before he came to you here."

"But before, when we were abroad—" Celia faltered.

"Pshaw! My dear, he was making love to me all the time. He did not know in those days, Celia, that you were an heiress, and, I suppose, thought me the best match."

For a moment there was silence.

"I can't believe it—I cannot!" said Celia, slowly, breaking in at length. "I—I think you are wrong."

"Oh! if you mean to tell me he did not really care about me, I dare say you are right, my dear," retorted Mrs. Sutherland. "I have no doubt he makes love to you as prettily and as easily as he did to me; but, for all that, he pretended to love me; indeed, I have—"

"But who told you he—he loved, or pretended to love me?" faltered Celia.

"Bah! We who know George Kingsborough—all his old acquaintances in town—can guess pretty well what keeps him for weeks at a dull place like Alderton; the hope of making a rich marriage at last," replied Mrs. Sutherland.

"Captain Kingsborough has never said—has never proposed to me," faltered Celia.

"Ha! ha! but something very like it, eh? He will doubtless get your grandfather's permission first. He is far too clever to risk offending him in any way, for Mr. Grandford might alter his will any day, and if he did, believe me, my dear, your gallant captain would 'ride away,' as the old song says."

At the mocking tones of her voice Celia's anger rose.

"I do not credit it," she cried. "You are only trying to tease and annoy me—to make me miserable, as you often did abroad. I do not see why you should try to blacken Captain Kingsborough's character to me—"

"Only because I have your true interests at heart, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Sutherland, coldly.

"I don't believe you have; it is for some other reason—I—I can't tell why," she retorted. "You always tried to keep us apart, but I know that if you had let him—"

"He would have made love to you whenever my back was turned—I can quite believe that, Celia; and if my eyes had been more open to his vices and deceitfulness, then I should not have permitted him to be so intimate with us. But what I have told you is true, and I would not mind staking my fortune that if I were to tell Captain Kingsborough the truth concerning my

money, he would throw you over and come back to me."

"There would be no throwing over in the case," cried Celia, with tears in her eyes. "Do not go away with the idea that—"

"That George Kingsborough loves you, certainly not, my dear—he is not capable of it; and it is of that I come to warn you. But I can see plainly enough, my poor child, that you love him."

Celia blushed crimson.

"You are cruel, very cruel," she began.

"No; I am not cruel. If I can save you from him I shall have done you a great kindness," she replied.

"At any rate, as Captain Kingsborough has not at present proposed to me, it is surely unnecessary to discuss this most unpleasant subject longer, Mrs. Sutherland," replied Celia, coldly. "Let us go back into the house."

"Well, forewarned is forearmed," said Olivia. "You know what sort of man you have to deal with, and—"

"Excuse me; I still think you are mistaken in Captain Kingsborough. He is a gentleman and a man of honor."

"Pshaw! Say rather a horse-racer, a gambler, and a fortune-hunter! I wish I had brought his letter with me, Celia—the letter he left for me when he went off from Newport; but I did not think you would have been so unbelieving," retorted Olivia. "Well, I've done my duty, and warned you, and if you choose to throw yourself away on him, I can't prevent you. Perhaps your grandfather—"

"Grandfather thinks Captain Kingsborough a perfect gentleman!" replied Celia, loftily.

"How long do you stay here, Mrs. Sutherland? My grandfather's eyes are so much better, that I return to my home this evening," said Celia, as they passed in at the garden gate.

"Oh, to-morrow or the next day I must go home! By the way, I am an heiress now, in a small way. My aunt has died and left me her small fortune. Don't tell George Kingsborough that, though, Celia; I don't want to be troubled with him again. Good-by, my dear!"

And kissing her hand as she lunched this parting shaft at poor Celia, Olivia departed.

"Detestable woman!" muttered Celia, stamping her foot angrily. "She has said all this to hurt me, and because, I suspect, Captain Kingsborough did not propose to her. And yet—yet—it is very odd—there are sometimes things about him that make me doubt if—"

Celia walked back to the house in silence. She had been now some three weeks or a month without seeing Captain Kingsborough, and had had time to think over matters, and to contrast his conversation and manners more fully with those of Geoffrey Dumont, not always to the former's advantage, and in her more sober moments she would wonder what made her prefer him to the latter.

She was to return to Cedar Grove that afternoon, and it wanted but a short time to the hour appointed for starting; so she re-entered the house, and began to prepare herself for her drive.

"Good-by, my dear! How grave you look!" said her old friend, as she bid her adieu. "I could almost fancy you were sorry to leave me and my dull little house."

"And I am, dear Miss Cressey," replied Celia. "I have had such a peaceful time of it here; but I must set to work again, you know."

"Ah, yes! We have all work to do, and your grandfather is a great charge, I know, my dear. Well, good-by! My compliments to Mr. Grandford. I hope his sight will be restored."

So Celia seated herself in the big carriage with the fat old carriage-horses, and soon found herself again at the gates of her grandfather's place.

Her heart beat quickly as they drew up at the door of the house.

Would Captain Kingsborough be there to meet her, or not?

He was not there, and for an instant she imagined he might have left, but the sight of his hat and coat in the hall reassured her.

"The master is sleeping, miss," said James in answer to her inquiries after her grandfather. "He is better, and in a day or two is to be allowed to remove the bandages from his eyes."

Celia turned away with a feeling of great thankfulness, not only for the probable restoration of her grandfather's sight, but also for the influence it would have on her own life. How much more easy and peaceful her existence would be when her grandfather should no longer be in constant want of her services!

She walked out into the garden, wondering where Captain Kingsborough was, and walking down a long avenue of thickly-growing, closely-clipped cedars the sounds of voices came to her ears, on the other side of it.

"Yes, sir," were the first words that fell on her ear, and the voice she recognized as the voice of her grandfather's secretary, a man she had never liked; "I should say the whole property is worth ten thousand a year. But it would bring in half as much again if Mr. Grandford would follow my advice. The factory, sir? Why, it's let at a monstrous low rent, and there's two or three more investments almost thrown away."

Celia wondered whom the man was addressing. Was it Captain Kingsborough?—and could he be really a fortune-hunter, as Mrs. Sutherland had said?—and was he trying to find out the exact amount of the wealth she was to inherit?

"The carriage has come in, sir," went on the secretary; "so the young lady must have returned, and you'll be wishing to see her; so good-evening, sir!"

He moved off, Celia blushing scarlet at the tone of his voice, and rushing down a side-path lest he should discover they had been overheard, or that the captain (if it were Captain Kingsborough he had been speaking to) should find her.

She reached the house, however, without meeting him; and it was not till she entered the drawing-room, dressed for dinner, that they met.

His greeting was a mixture of tender warmth and deferential respect that could not fail to touch Celia and banish from her heart the suspicions that had found rest there. Where was there another so gallant, so attentive, so fascinating and clever as George Kingsborough? Surely he must be true also!

Mr. Grandford seemed well pleased at his granddaughter's return—pleased, too, to hear her chatting so pleasantly with his friend.

Once or twice he began muttering to himself, as he often did; and Celia overheard the words, "A capital match for her—good old family—she could not do better." And she felt a rush of joy in her heart. Her grandfather, at any rate, did not think Captain Kingsborough a fortune-hunter.

Indeed, Mr. Grandford treated him with an amount of confidence and cordiality that astonished Celia, accustomed as she was to his repellent manner. He called him several times by his Christian name, talked to him of family affairs about which she knew nothing; and she found herself wondering how it was that he had gained such an influence over the stern old man.

As days passed on she wondered yet more at what she saw, and fancied she often detected an air of possession about the captain that vexed her; but the next moment the impression would be obliterated by some word or look that made her reproach herself for her suspicion, and wonder at the hold Mrs. Sutherland's words had taken of her.

A letter reached Captain Kingsborough about this time that made him look grave. He read it over twice and pondered deeply.

"Do you know, Miss Saville, that our old friend, Mrs. Sutherland, is in trouble? I hear she has lost her aunt—almost her only relation."

Celia started and blushed scarlet.

"Only fancy my forgetting to tell you! I was so happy at getting home again I forgot everything else, so you must forgive me. But Mrs. Sutherland was in Alderton the other day and came to see me. She told me of her aunt's death."

"Indeed! And—and I see my friend Royson says the old lady has left her all her money."

"Yes, she told me; all her little fortune, she said," returned Celia, uneasily.

"Indeed! I wonder how much? Mrs. Sutherland is poor, and extravagant; it will be a god-send to her!" said the captain. "Did she tell you what the amount was? Royson speaks as if it were a large sum."

"She said not; and I did not inquire further, as it was not a matter of interest to me," returned Celia, coldly.

"Of course not; neither does it matter to me," he rejoined carelessly.

But he read the letter again, and then put it carefully away.

"I'll find out all about it. I'll ride over to Alderton this very day," he thought, "and write to old Paulet for all the particulars, if I can't see Olivia herself. He knows everything, and will be sure to be able to tell me."

CHAPTER IX.

PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES.

ACCORDINGLY the next morning saw Captain Kingsborough on his way to Alderton, eager for an interview with Olivia; but early as he set out, he found her just stepping into the carriage that was to take her to the station, where she was to catch the first train to town.

"Captain Kingsborough, I do declare!" she cried, facing him with a playful smile on her face. "Well, how goes it with the heiress? Am I to congratulate you?"

"I—I hardly know what you mean," he faltered; "but if you allude to—"

"Hush! hush! no names; but of course I do," she returned.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"What foolish story have you been listening to?" he asked. "I only heard yesterday that you were at Alderton, or I should have been over to see you and to congratulate you, Olivia."

She looked at him sharply.

"What on? Oh, the little bit of money my poor aunt left me. Nonsense!—it is not worth mentioning, Captain Kingsborough. Well, I must be starting, or I shall lose my train. Good-by."

"Let me see you off; it will be quite like old times," he said, imploringly.

He was not yet quite convinced of the smallness of her aunt's legacy.

"Oh, yes, if you wish; there is a seat for you," she replied, carelessly.

And before George Kingsborough saw the train start for New York, she had managed to throw dust into his eyes most completely, and to convince him that she was not worth giving up his designs on the heiress for; while she had discovered exactly how far things had gone between him and Celia.

"I can save her and balk him," thought Olivia, "and I will do it. What a mean creature he is! One word from me, and he would have left that poor foolish child to cry her eyes out about him! But she has common-sense enough, and when she reads a little note I will send her, will surely understand his true character."

"It's no use thinking of her any more," muttered Captain Kingsborough to himself, as he rode home. "I must speak to old Grandford, and settle matters at once; of course he'll give Celia something on her marriage, and I shan't have long to wait for the rest. The old fellow may recover his sight, but it's easy to see he's breaking up fast."

Next day Captain Kingsborough put his plans into execution, and without much beating about the bush, asked Mr. Grandford for his granddaughter's hand.

"I love her devotedly," he said; "and I shall do all I can to make her happy. I am not a rich man, but have enough for us both, and if I have your consent to speak to her, I do not think I shall be refused. Money is a secondary consideration with me. We can speak of that if you please, after I have made myself sure of her affections."

"Very good—very good," said the old man, rather sarcastically. "Pleasure first, and business afterward. I don't say, however, that you are wrong. And you think that Celia is not disinclined toward you? There is no great confidence between us—my fault, I fear—so I must trust to your judgment as to that; but you have my consent, Captain Kingsborough; and as Celia is not accustomed to go contrary to my wishes, I have no doubt when she hears that I approve, she will accept you."

"And we will talk about money matters and so forth afterward, I suppose?" said the captain, hoping the old man might be led into explaining his intentions toward Celia more fully.

"Certainly; as I said before, there is no hurry about that. Make it all right with the young lady first, Kingsborough, and the rest will follow."

"Then I'll go and look for her, sir, with your permission," replied the captain, gayly. "I dare say I shall find her in the morning-room."

"Go, and good luck go with you. If she won't listen to reason, bring her to me, Kingsborough. I know how to manage her. Ha! ha!" laughed the old man, as he rubbed his hands gleefully together. "Good!" he chuckled; "the very match for her! But will she take him? He's somewhat old for a girl of her years."

"Margaret was but two years my junior, I remember. Ah!" and he hid his face with a groan, "he can't love the girl as I loved Margaret, not he; but he'll make her a good sort of husband, and I shall see her settled in life before I die. I half thought Geoffrey Dumont might have been her fancy; but he's a foreigner, and my property should never have been his!"

In vain Captain Kingsborough searched for Celia that afternoon. She was neither in the morning-room nor drawing-room, nor in the garden; and though he wandered far out through the park into the village, he could not find her. She had gone out, the servants said, some time before, and had not returned.

She had gone out. So far, they were right; but she had returned with a letter given her by a postman, and had retired with it to her own room to read: and when Captain Kingsborough was searching for her through the grounds, she was sitting hidden in her own little dressing-room in a passion of grief and perplexity.

The letter was from Mrs. Sutherland, and along with it she had inclosed a note:

"I saw you did not believe what I told you about George Kingsborough the other day, my dear Celia," she wrote. "I am sorry to hurt your feelings, but I implore you to read the letter I inclose, and by no means to give yourself to the captain before your grandfather has read both my letter and the note I inclose. I think my duty to you and to him who trusted you to my care requires me to ask this of you."

With a trembling hand, and hot, flushed cheeks, Celia had read the note sent her. At the first glance she perceived it was from George Kingsborough, and of very recent date; and when she laid it down, a rush of shame and despair filled her soul. Either Captain Kingsborough did not love her, and she had been deceiving herself with false hopes, or he loved only her fortune, and it was to gain it that he was striving so earnestly.

She read it again, and a sickening feeling of disgust filled her heart. Then she laid her head on the sofa-cushion and wept bitterly.

She took up the note again. Surely the expressions it contained, though warm, were not beyond the warmth of friendship? There was no word of marriage in it. There was regret at parting, and protestations of never-dying affection and regard. Nothing beyond, except that the writer hinted he had once hoped they might have some time been more than friends; but that, Celia thought and tried to persuade herself, might have been a long, long time ago.

She puzzled and pondered. It was hard to drag down from its pedestal the idol she had set up, to see in the brilliant man of the world she had looked on as a hero nothing but a deceitful, designing fortune hunter. She felt crazed with doubt and uncertainty. Was Mrs. Sutherland playing her false, or was George Kingsborough? She began to doubt both.

Then she thought of Geoffry Dumont. If it had been he, there would have been no one to dispute her love with her. There was no doubt of his truth and honesty; no suspicion had ever been cast on it.

She sat thinking, sadly enough, looking out of her window, till she saw Captain Kingsborough coming toward the house, looking cross and tired, just as the dressing-bell rung.

"What! you couldn't find her?" she heard Mr. Grandford say, as she entered the dining-room. "Ah, here she is! Where have you been hiding, child, all the afternoon, leaving us to ourselves in this way?"

"I have had a—headache, and have been in my room all the afternoon. Did you want me, grandfather?" she replied.

"A headache! I am so grieved!" began Captain Kingsborough.

"A headache! Bosh! Well, we've got something to say after dinner that will take away her headache, George, haven't we?" laughed the old man.

Celia paled, and looked from one to the other, and met the captain's eyes.

"I trust so," he said, meaningly, while Celia gave her arm, as usual, to her grandfather, and led him to his seat.

There was an understanding between the two men she plainly saw; and if Captain Kingsborough did propose to her, she saw that her grandfather expected that she would accept him at once.

She spoke little during dinner, but the two gentlemen kept up the conversation briskly. There was something, however, in their tone that jarred on Celia's overwrought and sensitive nerves, and she felt a feverish impatience for the meal to be over, so that she might make her escape.

But no such luck awaited her. Scarcely had the dessert been put on the table, and the servants left the room, when, on rising to depart, she was bidden at once, by Mr. Grandford, to remain.

"Faith, Celia! you must not be too cruel," he cried. "Here has George Kingsborough been looking for you all the afternoon, and you have

been hiding yourself from him. Now you are here, my dear, he has something to say to you. Eh, George?"

"I have, sir," faltered Captain Kingsborough, who, however, rather shrunk from proposing to Celia before her grandfather, "but if Miss Celia would prefer to wait till to-morrow to hear what I have to say—"

"Wait till to-morrow! What is the use of putting it off, George? I'll tell her if you like. Our good friend, Captain Kingsborough, has done you the honor of offering you his hand. He wishes you to be his wife, Celia."

Celia turned pale.

"Well, George, haven't you a word to say now. You seem quite flustered! Do you want me to do all the love-making for you?" he continued, with almost ferocious jocoseness. "Speak, man, or I shall think—"

"I am afraid we have frightened Miss Celia, sir, by opening the subject so suddenly," said Captain Kingsborough, his brow darkening. "I should have preferred to speak to her—"

"By moonlight alone, I suppose?" sneered Mr. Grandford, who appeared to be in one of his most eccentric moods. "I did not think you were so sentimental, George, or—"

"But," continued the captain, "as you have broached the subject so openly and unexpectedly, I will speak to Miss Saville before you. She must have seen how dear she is to me, and will not be surprised to hear that my first and greatest wish is to make her my wife—that I love her—"

"Is it so?—can that be true?" asked Celia, abruptly lifting up her pale face, and looking the captain steadily in the eyes.

"True? Can you doubt it, Celia?" he replied, fervently. "Long, long ago—last winter, when we were abroad, I longed to tell you what I am telling you now, only—"

"Only what?" asked Celia, in the same tone.

"Only I thought it best to secure your grandfather's approval and consent before I did so," he replied, after an instant's pause.

"Is this so, sir?" she asked, calmly turning to her grandfather.

"Is it so? Listen to the girl!" cried Mr. Grandford, half in anger, half in surprise.

"Yes; it is so, Celia. And I have given my consent and approval; and I tell you, my dear, I consider you a fortunate girl."

"But—" began Celia.

"But what?" cried Mr. Grandford. "I will have no nonsense; I—"

"But let Miss Celia speak, I beg," said the captain, in an agitated voice. "She will not keep me in suspense longer than she can help, I know, for I am sure she feels that suspense is very painful to me."

There was a real tone of anxiety in his voice that touched Celia's soft heart, and for a moment she thought of setting his mind at rest, and settling the whole matter by consenting to throw in her lot with his for weal or woe; but Mrs. Sutherland's words of warning came back to her forcibly, and she checked herself.

"I must ask for time to consider," she said, slowly. "As you say, Captain Kingsborough, this has come upon me rather suddenly. I did not expect it, believe me," she continued, hurriedly, seeing the expression of real disappointment that gathered on his brow. "I feel the honor, the compliment you have paid me, and am far from indifferent to your kindness; but yet—I can only beg—give me time to think of it."

"Just like a woman!" sneered Mr. Grandford. "Doesn't know her own mind! Time, indeed! Haven't you had time enough?"

"Certainly not. Oh, grandfather—Captain Kingsborough, do not hurry me!" she cried.

"Of course not, Miss Celia; your will is my law," replied Captain Kingsborough, gallantly. "Mr. Grandford, you will agree with me, I am sure, that we should do as Miss Saville wishes."

"And when does my fanciful fine lady think she will be able to know her own mind?" asked the old man, scornfully.

"In ten days," replied Celia, quietly, without noticing his tone. "You will give me till then, Captain Kingsborough?"

"If you say so, I cannot refuse, much as I feel the disappointment," he replied. "I had so hoped and believed that— But I will not urge you."

And he turned away; while Celia, without another word, left the room.

There was still a great doubt in her heart. She did not believe it was to secure her grandfather's consent he had refrained from speaking to her when they were in Italy. Some other motive had restrained him.

CHAPTER X.

THE RIGHTFUL HEIR.

THE doubt grew and strengthened itself as the next few days passed slowly on. Captain Kingsborough was more gloomy and silent than usual, and although he lost no opportunity of making her gallant and pretty speeches, there was an uneasiness in his manner that she could not put down to his suspense as to what her answer to him would be.

Meanwhile, the doctors had allowed Mr. Grandford for a short time each day to remove the bandages from his eyes. The operation had been successful, and after a year of darkness he beheld once more the light and the world around him.

"Well, Celia," he said, as on the appointed morning his granddaughter entered his study alone, holding in her hand the letter she had received from Olivia, and Captain Kingsborough's note, "you have come, I presume, to show me those mysterious letters you spoke of, and which have prevented you, as you tell me, from accepting George Kingsborough. Ah! from that fool, Olivia Sutherland! I thought as much. She set her cap at Kingsborough, as every one knows. But what is this?"

And his brow darkened for an instant as he read George Kingsborough's name at the bottom of the letter Celia handed to him.

"You see it cannot be that he really loves me, grandfather, when only a few weeks before he came here he was in love with Mrs. Sutherland. I'm afraid it is only—only because he believes I am your heiress he wants to marry me."

Mr. Grandford was silent for a moment, and then burst out with an angry oath.

"It is that idiot—that spiteful little idiot—who has done all the mischief, and set you against Kingsborough. Here, take these letters and throw them into the fire. I am a fool to have wasted my time and eyesight over them. Kingsborough is a gentleman, and loves you as much and more than you deserve. Put all this jealous nonsense out of your head, and behave like a girl of sense. Give me my shade again; the light hurts my eyes."

For a moment Celia hesitated.

"Grandfather, I cannot marry him!" she burst out at length. "I do not believe he is true. There is something about him that makes me believe he is deceiving me. Oh, how could I ever have fancied I cared for him?"

And at that moment Celia felt that her idol was, indeed, but an idol of clay.

"Oh! so you have changed your mind, have you?" retorted Mr. Grandford with cutting sarcasm. "Just like a woman! You lead on my friend Kingsborough, and then for a foolish whim or fancy you throw him over. Now, once for all, I tell you, whether you be my heiress or not—"

"She is not your heiress!" said a calm voice beside him.

And starting with a sudden terror, Celia perceived a tall, graceful-looking woman, dressed in black, standing close to her grandfather's chair, and behind her a figure, so like the portrait in the picture-gallery, she had in former days playfully called the Prodigal Son—the picture of her cousin, Christopher Grandford—that she stood struck dumb with amazement.

There was a deep silence for a moment, and Celia could hear her grandfather's long-drawn breathing.

"Grandfather!" she said.

"What, you here?" he cried angrily. "Leave the room at once! Go!" he added.

And tearing the shade from his eyes, again he faced his unexpected visitor.

No look of recognition betrayed that he had any previous acquaintance with her.

"Who are you?" he asked, his breast heaving. "Who are you who dare to speak such words in my presence? You have never seen me before."

"You are right, sir," she replied, coldly; "but here is one whom you cannot fail to recognize."

The old man turned round. As he caught sight of her companion, a ghastly change came over his face.

"Christopher!" he muttered, "Christopher Grandford! my nephew—after all these years!"

"Not your nephew Christopher, but his son Geoffry!" he answered in a voice that made Mr. Grandford start again. "Pardon me because I came to you using only my mother's name. I came with a purpose!"

"Doubtless," interrupted the old man, a bitter laugh issuing from between his white lips. "Your purpose was not far to guess—to ruin me and turn me out of house and home, and

claim the property I have always believed to be mine—"

"That you have always chosen to call your own!" put in the lady, calmly. "I am Mrs. Lintoni, Mr. Grandford—Emile Dumont's cousin! We have never met, but we have corresponded before."

A burning flush passed over the old man's brow. His secret was about to be made public—the secret he had buried so deeply that he believed it would never rise again to confront him. "Your proofs!" he muttered, looking at Geoff-

"I have ample proofs of who I am, sir, and am prepared to show them to you if you wish it! But do not think I come here with the desire or intention of wresting from you the property you have so long looked upon as your own. No; I am your nephew's son—your own flesh and blood, sir! Do you think I would wish to bring disgrace and dissension on the family?"

Mr. Grandford looked from one to the other as if stupefied.

"But why did you steal into my house under a false name?" he muttered. "If you are my nephew; if—"

"I will explain it all, sir," replied Geoffry, eagerly. "Believe me, no ill-motive actuated me. I would not for worlds do a mean or dishonorable action; but—"

And he hesitated, and Mr. Grandford laughed coldly and cynically.

"And you expect me to believe all this—to believe that a poor needy adventurer, coming for the first time to the land of his fathers, with full proofs, as he declares, of his claims to the family property, will drop these claims and give up these rights for the sake of a miserable old man who has knowingly" (and he emphasized the word) "kept him out of them—for I did know of your existence when I took my place here as head of the family, though, year after year passing away without your appearing to disturb me, I had grown to persuade myself that you were dead, and I really what I called myself, the owner of all brother's property. Now you know all—that I, or this lady, whom I also believed dead, can tell you of me, and you will perceive that you are not bound to me by any ties either of gratitude or affection! Produce your proofs, sir, and when you have done with the lawyers—for I will fight my cause out to the end, bad as it is—you can have the pleasure of turning me and my granddaughter out of house and home, and exposing my perfidy—as I suppose the world would call it—to the public!"

"Do not speak so, sir!" replied Geoffry, quietly. "As I have told you, I have no intention of disturbing you, and if you have done me an injury, I freely forgive it. Will you believe me, uncle, and give me your love and confidence, instead of mistrusting me, as I see you do?"

And Geoffry held out his hand to the old man.

"What!" he muttered, drawing back. "To save the family honor will you give up your claims, and—"

"I have no need of wealth," replied Geoffry. "In Italy, uncle, I have estates inherited from my mother to which your property will not bear comparison. I am neither poor nor an adventurer; I have no need of the money you enjoy. It was not even to claim it that I came to America. Until I saw Miss Saville, I had no idea of making myself known to you. Now, love for her, and the hope of saving her from what I would look on as worse than death or poverty, has induced me to declare myself."

"Celia! I had forgotten her," muttered the old man, hardly looking at Geoffry.

"You have promised her hand to George Kingsborough?" continued Geoffry.

"Ay, and you love her?" said Mr. Grandford.

"I do," replied Geoffry.

"My word is given," replied the old man firmly; "and if you are a Grandford, you will understand that it cannot be retracted."

"But if Miss Saville refuses?" said Mrs. Lintoni softly.

"Then—" began Mr. Grandford angrily; but in a moment his face changed. "Ah! she is not my heiress now."

"She is your heiress as long as I do not claim the property, sir," replied Geoffry; "but I tell you plainly that it was to prevent this marriage, if possible, I came here to-day. George Kingsborough does not love Celia. It is her money he cares for. He is a ruined gambler and spendthrift, sir, and no happiness to Celia could come from a marriage with him, though I fear" (and his face fell) "she loves him."

"And how do you propose to prevent this marriage?" asked Mr. Grandford, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice. "In love and war all things are fair, they say; but—"

"To me the method is a simple one enough," replied Geoffry quietly. "You have given your word to Captain Kingsborough. May I ask you if you have also given him to understand Celia is your heiress?"

"Faith! the world knows, or fancies it knows, that," laughed the old man harshly; "but we have had no talk about money matters yet. He put that off till after the betrothal should have taken place."

"Good!" cried Geoffry. "Then all is clear steering before us. You have only to tell Captain Kingsborough that Celia is not your heiress, and he will soon find an excuse for ridding you of his company and giving up his pretensions to Celia's hand."

"Good Heaven, sir! do you believe him to be such a wretch?" cried Mr. Grandford. "If I thought so— But no; it is impossible."

"Try, and you will see I am right. It is the only favor I ask of you. If I am wrong, then a week at most will see me on my way back to Italy, and I shall never trouble you more."

There was a long silence, broken at last by Mr. Grandford, who spoke in a strangely softened tone.

"If all you say as to your intentions, as well as to your identity—and I do not doubt the latter—is true, you are a wonderful man, sir; but the proofs—let me see them."

"Certainly," replied Geoffry. "Mrs. Lintoni has the marriage certificate of my father and mother, sir, which my mother sent her to take care of when she went to India with my father. As you are aware, he died, and reliable proof of his death was given you, as also of my existence."

Mr. Grandford moved uneasily, and seemed about to speak, but Geoffry went on:

"From Mrs. Lintoni you had this information, and you promised her, in this letter, to spare no pains to find us; and three years later, when she returned to Italy, after a long absence, she heard that my mother was dead, and that I had left Naples with a stranger. She concluded I had gone to America and to you; instead, I was traveling almost in ignorance of my father's history, and of my relatives in America, till, among my father's papers—which I, as my poor mother had, most religiously preserved—I found the whole history of his life, and learned who I was. I let a year or two pass without starting to visit the land of my father's birth; then a yearning to see the place that he had known and loved as a boy, and to make acquaintance with the places he spoke of in his letters, seized me, and last spring, only a few weeks before I came here, sir, for the first time, I started for America. Here, sir, are the letters my father left."

Mr. Grandford took them up one by one, and slowly perused them, his face stern and cold, while Mrs. Lintoni and Geoffry sat silently by, watching him.

"It is well," he said at last. "You are my great-nephew, Christopher's son, and I—"

"You are owner of Cedar Grove, and my father's uncle," replied Geoffry, firmly.

"And Celia—" began Mr. Grandford.

"She must on no account know who I am," cried Geoffry, eagerly. "I love her, and you know, sir, how strong and unchangeable the love of a Grandford is. If she marry this George Kingsborough (which Heaven forbid) you will hear and see little more of me. But if not, then I purpose to remain, and strive to win her heart—not as Geoffry Grandford, your nephew, but as Geoffry Dumont, the Italian, as she has always believed me to be."

"You love her truly, then?" said the old man, in a voice of emotion.

"More than life itself! Will you not give me the chance I ask you for, sir?" he returned.

"You have a right to demand it," answered Mr. Grandford, with a sigh. "Yes; I will tell George Kingsborough this evening that Celia is not my heiress. And faith! I can say so with truth now."

For an hour or more they sat talking of the past and future; and then Geoffry and Mrs. Lintoni left, and Mr. Grandford sunk back in his chair, and covering his face with his hands, sat till darkness closed in around him, alone and silent, his heart filled with shame, remorse, and bitterness.

Celia had fled, as usual, to the shelter of her dressing-room, and seated there, with her letters beside her, had wondered long who the stranger Geoffry Dumont had brought to see

her grandfather might be, and why she had spoken such strange words, and as she thought of them her heart beat with joy.

"If they are only true," she thought, "my doubts of George Kingsborough will soon be cleared away. If I am not grandfather's heiress, as she said, he will have no reason for marrying me save for love; and then I shall know that this hateful letter," (and she tossed Olivia's letter from her lap to the floor) "is all a lie. George Kingsborough cannot be such a cold-blooded deceiver as she would have me believe!"

And then she thought of Geoffry, and his strange likeness to Cousin Christopher she had discovered in him since he had shaved off his beard and whiskers. What did it all mean?

She was puzzled, and could give no answer to the question that troubled her.

CHAPTER XI.

CHECKMATED.

MEANTIME, Captain Kingsborough, who had gone into Alderton that day, had been passing anything but an easy time. He had received letters of various sorts, some of which had perplexed, and some of which had alarmed, and all of which had annoyed him.

Two told him of racing losses; and another was an angry demand for money from a creditor; another, a not less peremptory reminder from a money-lender; and another, the one that perplexed him, was from a friend, asking him why, in the name of fortune, he had given up Olivia Sutherland and her enormous fortune, to bury himself in the country for the sake of a little heiress, whose wealth was as nothing compared to the other's.

"Come up and try your luck at once," the letter concluded, "or you will be too late; unless, indeed" (and Captain Kingsborough could quite appreciate the ironical intention of the writer), "you are really in love with your country beauty."

"In love with her!" he muttered, angrily. "Hardly: although she is pretty enough, and would make an excellent wife, and one a fellow might be proud of, with a little more training and knowledge of society. But what does St. John mean by Olivia's fortune? She told me herself it was a mere nothing. Things get exaggerated so. I wonder why old Paulet hasn't answered my letter? He's sure to know the truth. I wish he had written though, for by to-morrow I suppose I shall be formally engaged to my country heiress."

It was late when Captain Kingsborough returned to Cedar Grove, so late that Celia had gone to bed, but late as it was, Mr. Grandford sent to request him to come into the study, as he had some business to talk over with him.

"To tell me I am accepted, I suppose, and what I may expect with my bride," thought the captain, stroking his long black mustache thoughtfully. "Bother old Paulet! I wish I were certain about Olivia's money."

"Good-evening, Captain Kingsborough," said Mr. Grandford, as he entered the study. "You are late to-night."

"Yes, later than I could have wished," replied Captain Kingsborough. "I knew, I trusted, at least—you would have some news to tell me to-night, for the ten days for which I was to wait for Miss Celia's answer are over."

"Yes, they are over," he replied, turning a white, laggard face toward Captain Kingsborough.

"You are ill, sir!" he cried. "Let us put off this conversation for a few days. I have to run up to town to-morrow for a day or two, and I can wait till—"

"No, no, better have it over at once," replied Mr. Grandford. "I fear I ought to have been more open with you, Kingsborough; and if what I have now to tell you puts you out at all, I shall bitterly regret my mistake. You have my granddaughter, Kingsborough, is it not so?"

"With all my heart and soul," cried the captain, inwardly, however, much perplexed by Mr. Grandford's speech. "It is to learn if she loves me in return that I am now here."

"I believe—I fear she may," returned Mr. Grandford, musingly.

"You fear! I believe you approved of me, sir, and sanctioned my suit to your granddaughter," replied the captain, warmly.

"Yes, yes; don't mistake me. I have given my word, sir, and do not recall it; but I fear you may have made your proposal for Celia's hand under a misapprehension, and with the idea that she is far richer than she really is."

"How so, sir?" asked the captain, turning pale. "Is not Miss Saville your heiress, then?"

"No," replied Mr. Grandford, firmly, "she is not my heiress. Beyond a few hundred dollars,

the wreck of her father's property, she has nothing, and at my death will receive nothing from me."

There was a dead silence, which lasted a full minute. Captain Kingsborough's face had grown very blank.

"This certainly takes me by surprise," he said, at last. "I—people—rumor always—"

"People always believed Miss Saville to be my heiress—I know that," replied Mr. Grandford; "but, as usual, people are wrong. I thought that before things went any further between you and Celia I would let you understand this fully."

"Then am I to understand that you give your granddaughter nothing?" cried Captain Kingsborough, in angry amazement.

"Nothing but what is her own—some fifteen or sixteen hundred dollars, sir," he answered. "You told me you were well off—had enough, in fact, for both—otherwise I might have told you sooner what Celia's fortune was. I do not think I ever told you I intended to leave her anything."

"Perhaps not in words, sir," retorted the captain, getting more and more angry; "but you allowed me to imagine rumor for once spoke the truth."

"I know little, and care less, what the outside world says of me and my intentions," answered Mr. Grandford, abruptly; "at any rate, I have spoken plainly enough now."

"You have, indeed!" answered Kingsborough, bitterly.

"And now, if you wish it, I will tell you what Celia has said to me. Girls, you know, require to be humored. I'm afraid I was cross with Celia, and we were interrupted before we had had our talk out. Still—"

"Then, if you please, I will wait to hear Miss Saville's reply till—I return from town; and—and I must say, sir, before I leave you, that I think I have not been treated fairly; that, indeed, I have been treated very unfairly by you. I love your granddaughter, it is true; but—but this entire want of fortune will embarrass me not a little. I doubt, in fact, if it will not oblige me to put off our marriage for a time; but we must talk of this another time. I will leave you now, sir, as I must start for town early. Say good-by for me to Miss Saville, and tell her I await her answer on my return."

"So be it, sir!" replied the old man.

And without giving his hand to George Kingsborough, he slowly rose, and walked from his study to his bedroom; while Captain Kingsborough, sorely angry and disappointed, retired to his room to make preparations for an early start on the morrow.

He felt himself to be an ill-used man; he felt as if he had been cheated out of his rights by Mr. Grandford.

What had he gained by spending weeks in his society? Why had he willfully misled him as to Celia's position in his house?

"The old fellow's mad—that's my impression," he murmured; "but it's well he told me in time. It's all that little viper Olivia's doing. What a spiteful, treacherous little creature she is! It was she who told me Celia was Grandford's heiress. Hum! I wonder why Paulet has not written? If her fortune is really large, I must strive to regain her confidence. She was very kind to me the other day at Alderton, and did not seem to bear malice for what has passed. I wonder did she know the truth about Celia? I'll soon find out. Poor little girl. I wonder if she'll be much cut up at losing me?"

Next morning, just as Captain Kingsborough was leaving, a letter from General Paulet was put into his hand. It was written from New York, and confirmed the news of Olivia Sutherland's wealth.

"I've seen all the law-papers myself," said he; "so you can believe what I tell you. Come and make up your quarrel with Mrs. Sutherland at once. She has a great future before her."

The captain rubbed his hands in glee.

"What luck!—what an extraordinary piece of good fortune! If I had once become engaged to Celia Saville, I might have found it hard to break with her; but that confession of the old man's last night saved me. Olivia shall be my wife, and with five hundred thousand dollars, I would not wish for a better partner!"

And all the way to New York, Captain Kingsborough meditated on the wonderful good fortune in store for him, for he had little or no doubt that Olivia would accept him for her husband. There was only the task of writing to Mr. Grandford, and crying off his match with Celia to be got through, and then all would be plain sailing; and he felt a life of luxury and idleness lay before him.

When he arrived in town he drove straight to her house, but found she was away in the country. He was not sorry. It would give him time to write to Mr. Grandford, and settle matters with him before he saw her; and with a cheerful smile, he turned his steps toward his hotel, and next next day he penned the following epistle to Mr. Grandford:

"Dear sir," he began, "the very extraordinary news you communicated to me on Tuesday evening obliges me to write to you in a strain which I had never imagined it would have been necessary to use. I have every respect and esteem for Miss Saville, but being a comparatively poor man, I can not afford to marry unless my wife can bring a fair portion to me, to enable me to keep her in the style in which she should live. I regret, therefore, to inform you that after your disclosure, so long and so strangely delayed, to me the other night, I feel it my duty, much as I suffer from doing so, to resign my pretensions to Miss Saville's hand."

"The mean cur! Celia was right, after all!" muttered Mr. Grandford, as he flung the letter savagely from him. "Geoffrey was right. By Jove! the girl owes him a good turn. I must tell her her suspicions were correct, and she had better forget the fortune-hunting rascal as soon as she can. Poor child—poor Celia! But I trust she has not given him her heart."

Celia, with some surprise, had seen the captain drive off that morning, and a fit of remorse seized her when she thought that perhaps her grandfather had given him to understand that she was unwilling to become his wife; but Mr. Grandford had said nothing to her on that day or the next, and she half-expected Captain Kingsborough would return on the morning she was summoned into her grandfather's study, and saw the letter in George Kingsborough's handwriting on the table.

Her heart beat quickly as it caught her eye, and Mr. Grandford accosted her in a voice so kind and gentle that she hardly recognized that it was his.

"Celia, my child," he said, "I have sad news for you. Your doubts of Captain Kingsborough, together with—with other things I have learned, caused me to tell him, when I spoke to him the other night on business matters, that you were not my heiress; and that, beyond your own little fortune, you would bring him nothing."

"Yes, grandfather," said Celia, eagerly; "and he?"

"He seemed greatly put out, and left the house the next day, as you know; and this morning I received this letter from him. You were right in your suspicions, my poor child; it was your fortune, and not you, that he really wanted."

Celia took up the letter and read it through slowly.

"Mrs. Sutherland was right," she said, in a husky voice. "I was unjust to doubt her. Grandfather, I thank you. I have had an escape. I had made up my mind to trust him through all, and you have prevented me from making a fatal mistake."

She was silent, and two big tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Celia," said the old man, in an almost frightened voice, "you won't fret over this—you won't let it prey on your mind? Oh, child! I have been harsh, and hard, and exacting, I know, but yet I love you, and your tears go to my heart."

In a moment, Celia's arms were round her grandfather's neck, and for a moment or two she sobbed quietly on his bosom, while he soothed and petted her. At length she dried her eyes.

"You are right, grandfather; he is not worth crying for," she said at last, with an effort. "I was foolish even to fancy him a hero. I ought to have seen through him sooner. I will try hard to forget him."

"That is a brave girl," rejoined Mr. Grandford. "Never give him another thought, child; he is not worth it."

But though Celia put a brave face on the matter, her heart ached for many a day afterward. Not only were her feelings wounded, but her pride and vanity were deeply hurt. She had believed George Kingsborough loved her for herself only, and behold! it was only her grandfather's money he cared for. At the first intimation that this was not to be hers he had left her, without so much as wishing her adieu or expressing a regret for the pain he caused her.

And quite carelessly, almost forgetting the existence of the girl who he had imagined would soon be his wife, did George Kingsborough, ten days later, enter Olivia Sutherland's drawing-room and seat himself beside

her with the air of a privileged friend. There was a look of confusion and bustle, however, in the room that surprised him. Olivia shut up her blotting-book on the letter she was writing, as he entered, and threw her handkerchief carelessly over something that lay on the table beside it.

"Well, George, you are come at last to congratulate me, I suppose?" she said, holding out both her little hands to him.

He took them and pressed his lips to them gallantly.

"Fie! fie!" she said, playfully. "That cannot be allowed now, you know."

"And why not?" he said. "Dear Olivia, if only a tenth part of what I have heard is true—"

"Do you mean that my aunt has left me five hundred thousand dollars?" interrupted she.

"Yes, or a tenth of that, don't you see that all obstacle to your marriage is at an end?" he continued.

"Our marriage? I don't understand!" began Olivia, putting on a face of baby-like perplexity.

"Was it not poverty that parted us? Surely you know I only left you because I dared not ask you to give up your small fortune for me, but you know all the while how devotedly I loved you, and you know I love you still!"

Olivia burst into a fit of shrill laughter.

"Oh! is it that old, old story you are telling me? George Kingsborough, forgive me for laughing, but you must never mention it again. I am to be married to Henry Astor next month. I thought that was what you had come to congratulate me on!"

CHAPTER XII.

AT LAST.

It was a lovely summer morning a year later; the sun had set, and one by one the stars were beginning to shine forth in the deep blue sky. The sea was as calm as glass, and tinged here and there with a lovely pink hue, as it reflected the last dying rays of the sun; and the little white waves broke with a playful ripple at Celia Saville's feet as she sat on the beach of the watering-place where she and her grandfather were staying. She had a book in her hand, but she was not reading; her eyes were fixed on the smoke of a steamer—all that could be seen of it at present—and a happy smile played on her lips.

"That must be the Sound steamer; it is late this evening. How glad poor grandfather will be to see Mr. Dumont again! He was so sorry to lose him even for a fortnight, but of course it was right of him to go and see Mrs. Lintoni off for Italy. Grandfather says that besides being his mother's cousin, she has done him a great service, and I'm sure he must be fond of her. She is the kindest, cleverest person I ever met. How slowly the steamer comes, and yet it has the wind in its favor!"

Celia was wrong, however. The steamer was going twelve knots an hour, and very soon it entered the little harbor, hidden from her eyes, however, by the cliff and little town.

She took up her book and tried to read, then laid it down again.

"Mr. Dumont will go straight home, I know, to see grandfather, so I can stay here another hour, and let them have their talk out. Perhaps they won't want me to interrupt them. I sometimes think grandfather cares a great deal more for Geoffrey Dumont than he does for me. Heigho!"

Steps on the sand behind her made her start, and, turning round, she perceived the object of her thoughts close to her.

"What! did you not go home first, then?" she cried, a blush of joy spreading over her face as she timidly held out her hand to Geoffrey.

"I did," he answered, taking it, and seating himself beside her; "but Mr. Grandford told me you were here, so, after a few words together, I came to look for you."

"And you saw Mrs. Lintoni off?" asked Celia, feeling she must talk, and yet scarcely knowing what to say. "She must have been sorry to say good-by to you; it will be a long time before you meet again."

"Perhaps. But I don't know; I am not so certain of that," he answered.

"Why, is she coming back, then?" asked Celia, in surprise. "She told me she would not be in America again for three years at least."

"That may be," replied Geoffrey, slowly; "but I may return to Italy before then."

The pink flush died out of Celia's cheeks, and she looked blankly at Geoffrey with large, reproachful eyes.

"What, you—you are thinking of leaving us?" she faltered.

"Sometimes I think of it," he replied.

"But not seriously?" she said, in an imploring tone. "Think, what should we—what would grandfather do without you?"

And the tears rushed into her eyes.

Next minute, however, she forced them back.

"It is very natural that you should wish to return to your own country and friends," she said, apologetically; "and I am very selfish to wish to detain you, but—"

"Would you care if I left you, Celia? Would you miss me?" he said, earnestly.

Celia started, and trembled at his tone. She had learned during the past year to love Geoffrey with all her heart, and the thought of parting with him was more than she could bear.

"Believe me, Celia," he continued, "if it would grieve you to part from me half a tenth part as much as it would grieve me to go away from you, I would never leave you. With you rests my fate. If you bid me stay, I will do so; but if so, will you consent to share my life with me—to be the wife of Geoffrey Dumont, the Italian?"

"Geoffrey Dumont, the Italian!" How dear the name and designation had grown to her now! She raised her eyes shyly to his.

"If you are content to take me, plain Celia Saville as I am—no longer an heiress, remember!"

And she smiled timidly.

"I love you, Celia—it is you only I want!" he replied. "Are you not afraid to trust yourself to a poor Italian adventurer?"

"Hush!" she replied, laying her hand on his lips. "Rich or poor, American or foreigner, I love you, and you only, Geoffrey; and if you are willing to take me, I will be your wife!"

"What, even if you should have to live in Italy some day with me?" he said.

"Yes; even then," she replied, with a smile. "But, oh! poor grandfather; we must think of him."

For half an hour they sat together, hand in hand, on the beach, till the last faint glimmer of sunset died away, and the tide began to rise; then they got up, and turned their steps toward the town.

"What will your grandfather say, darling?" said Geoffrey, as he looked fondly into the beautiful face. "Will he consent to give you up, do you think?"

"Poor grandfather! But he loves you, Geoffrey, more than any one on the face of the earth. And do you know I sometimes believe it is because you are so like the portrait of it is because you are so like the portrait of my cousin Christopher, his nephew; yes, you are, indeed, though I never noticed the likeness till the day you came down to The Chase with Mrs. Lintoni on some mysterious business, the particulars of which neither she nor grandfather have ever divulged to me."

"Perhaps he will tell you now, darling, or I will, for there must be an end to all secrets between us," he replied.

They had reached the cottage which Mr. Grandford, in obedience to the commands of his medical advisers, had taken at the seashore for the summer and autumn, and pushing open the door that led into the garden, Celia and Geoffrey entered.

They found Mr. Grandford seated in his easy-chair beneath a clump of shady trees. He gave a start and an exclamation of pleasure as they approached, looking eagerly into Geoffrey's face, as if he expected good news.

"Well?" he said; "well?"

"You were right; it is all right, sir!" he cried joyfully, putting his arm round Celia. "She has promised to become my wife—the wife of Geoffrey Dumont!"

"Grandfather, you will not say no, will you?" said Celia, pleadingly.

"Nay, my child; I say yes with all my heart; but yet I cannot give you to Geoffrey Dumont, the Italian."

"But I love him, grandfather! I have promised to be his wife; to return to his country with him, if need be," she cried, clinging to Geoffrey's arm.

"And you shall be his wife, child—the wife of the man beside you. No Italian, however, my dear, but your own cousin, my great-nephew, Geoffrey Dumont Grandford."

And Mr. Grandford held out one hand to his nephew, and drew Celia, all perplexed and astonished, to him with the other.

"Don't you see—can't you understand it, little goose?" he went on, playfully. "Geoffrey

came over to America to see the house wherein his father was born. On the way he met you, and his foolish heart was set on making you his wife from that day. He wished to win your love without making himself known to either you or me. Circumstances compelled him to discover himself to me; but he hid the secret from you, little one, and I think he did well in so doing. Geoffrey, look at her. I think you have won what you set your heart on."

"I owe everything to him," went on Mr. Grandford, gravely. "Do you know, Celia, this young man is the rightful possessor of all my property; that you were not, as I told you a year ago, an heiress; that he could turn us both out of the house we have so long considered ours if—"

"But do not talk of that. To all intents it is yours, uncle; you know that. Never speak of it again in that way," said Geoffrey, while Celia regarded him with eyes of admiration.

"Ay, boy, I know—I know," said the old man with a sigh. "Celia, the husband of your choice is a model of chivalrous generosity. I am proud to think that ere long Cedar Grove will have such a worthy possessor."

"Not for many a year yet will it lose its present one, I trust, sir," answered Geoffrey.

And Celia kissed her grandfather silently on the forehead, and the three sat in deep, calm happiness in the quiet moonlight, till the old church clock warned them of the lateness of the hour, and they re-entered the house.

Before autumn was over there was a quiet wedding at the pretty little village church, and an hour or two after it was over, Geoffrey and Celia Grandford started on their wedding tour.

"You must try and not be dull while we are away, dear grandfather," were Celia's parting words. "A fortnight will soon be over, and then we shall be back again to home and you."

"Nay, nay, my dear; a month—a month! You must not hurry! In my day all newly-married folks took a month's holiday, in order to get tired of one another! You must not think of returning on my account—I can not bear of that!" he replied. "Good-by, my children, and Heaven bless you! Cedar Grove shall be ready for you this day month."

And a month later the newly-married couple drove through the green avenues of Cedar Grove, and up to the door of the old house, where Mr. Grandford was waiting on the steps to receive them.

"Who do you think we met in Washington, grandfather?" said Celia, as they talked over their tour together. "My old friend Mrs. Sutherland—or, rather, Mrs. Henry Astor, as she is now. I thought her much improved; her husband is a sensible man, and has done her good."

"Hum! he ought to feel thankful to her for having set him on his feet again; he was a comparatively poor man when he married her. Her five hundred and fifty thousand dollars saved him from ruin."

"They seem to get on pretty well together," said Geoffrey; "they don't see too much of each other—they are too fashionable for that; but she is certainly improved by her marriage, and she really is good-hearted. She made her husband get a position for her old friend Kingsborough in some Western State, and—"

"Hum!" interrupted Mr. Grandford; "it is more than he deserves. Much too good for the mean fortune-hunter!"

"Well, we can afford to forgive and forget, can't we, Celia?" replied Geoffrey. "For my part, I'm glad he was only a fortune-hunter—eh, Celia?"

"Yes; and that you found him out in time!" she replies, softly. "I wish him no ill, however!"

"Nor I—nor I!" rejoined Mr. Grandford; "but that Olivia Sutherland always was a foolish woman! Any position is far too good for a man of that sort; Mr. Astor should certainly have known better!"

But it is doubtful if Olivia ever told him that George Kingsborough was in the opinion of most people only a fortune-hunter, or the clever way in which she balked his attempt on her own fortune, and on that of Mr. Grandford's supposed heiress.

THE END.

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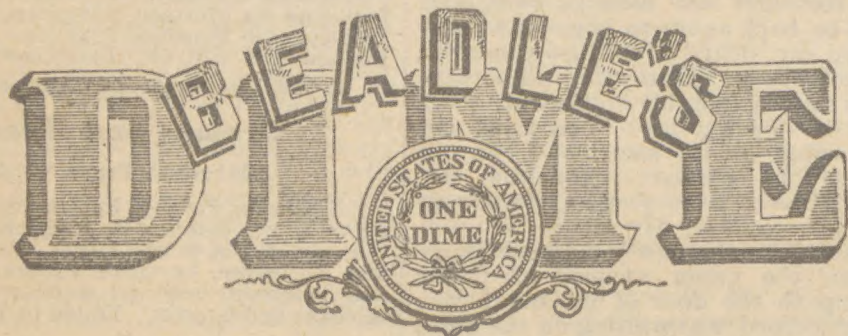
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